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ABSTRACT

The Colorado Charter Schools Act requires the State Board of Education to compile the evaluations of charter schools received from local boards of education and to review information regarding waivers from state regulations and statutes. This document is a response to the mandate. The study focused on the 14 schools that had been operating for at least 1 year as of April 1996 and that had filed at least 1 annual school-improvement plan. The evaluation was based on the student-achievement data used by the charter schools. Data were gathered through a review of documents and a questionnaire of charter-school directors. Diversity in the charter schools' performance goals, assessment tools, and financial data prevented comparison of the performance of charter-school students with that of students in public schools. The study therefore looked at whether charter schools had set explicit criteria for the evaluation of student achievement and whether the schools had collected data to make their judgments accordingly. The report identifies the characteristics of Colorado charter schools and their students. Findings show that all 14 charter schools had set performance goals; 6 provided data that showed they had met or exceeded a significant portion of their goals; 5 met some of their goals; and 3 did not provide enough data. All but one depended heavily on district funding. On average, the charter schools spent 82.5 percent of their budgets on student-specific expenditures. Finally, charter schools had used the state waiver provision extensively. A total of 19 tables are included. Appendixes contain a sample individual school-data matrix and a sample questionnaire. (LMC)

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THE COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOLS EVALUATION

Prepared for
Colorado Department of Education

cde

By The Clayton Foundation
and The Center for Human Investment Policy
at The University of Colorado at Denver

March 1997

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March 1997

COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOLS EVALUATION REPORT

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Appendix

Colorado Charter Schools 1996 Statistical Portrait

32 Schools Currently Open
Elementary: 4
Elementary/Middle: 14
Middle: 5
High: 3
K-12: 6

SCHOOLS

As a percentage of state schools: **2.1%**
Likely to open in Fall 1997: **20**
Closed since 1993*: **0**

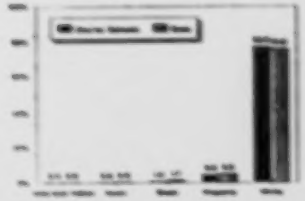
* *Denver's Classics Charter School is scheduled to close at the end of the 1996-97 school year*

Charters Granted to:
Parents/Teachers/Community: 27
Non-profits/Foundations: 2
For-profits: 1
Universities: 1
Cities: 1

Challenger Schools: 7
Schools of Excellence: 3

Appeals to State Board as of March 1997: **50**
Decisions upheld: **21**
Sent back on remand: **13**
Ordered establishment of charter school: **1**
Overturned local board revocation: **1**
Hearing vacated: **1**
Dismissed: **13**

Staff by Racial/Ethnic Group



STAFF*

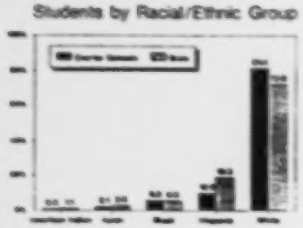
Number of teachers in full-time equivalents-FTE: **393.3** *(State: 36,397.8)*
Number of teachers: **411** *(State: 37,408)*
Percentage of racial /ethnic minorities: **7.5%** *(State: 9.0%)*
Percentages of males/females: **20.0% / 80.0%** (State: 27.5% / 72.5%)

Average pupil/teacher ratio: **17.6/1** *(State: 18.5/1)*
Average selected** pupil/teacher ratio: **18.6/1** *(State: 24.5/1)*
** *excludes specialized subject area, special education, Title 1 and Title 6 teachers*

Average salary: **$26,781** *(State: $36,271)*
Salary range: **$17,000-$48,400** *(State: $17,000-$64,487)*
Average years experience: **6.0** *(State: 13.0)*
Percentage with master's degree or higher: **26.3%** *(State: 47.2%)*

* *In fall 1996 Alpine Charter School did not report staff data. P.S. 1 data were incomplete.*

Students by Racial/Ethnic Group



STUDENTS

Enrollment: **6,941** *(State: 673,438)*
Enrollment range: **23-783** *(State: 3-3,325)*
Average enrollment: **217** *(State: 452)*
Enrollment as percentage of district public school population: **1.9%**
Enrollment as percentage of state public school population: **1.0%**

Percentage of racial/ethnic minorities: **18.6%** *(State: 28.0%)*
Percentages of males/females: **50.9% / 49.1%** *(State: 51.4% / 48.6%)*
Percentage on free lunch: **13.9%** *(State: 21.8%)*
Percentage in Title I*: **0.3%** *(State: 7.9%)*
Percentage in English Language Proficiency Act*: **0.1%** *(State: 3.3%)*
Percentage in Special Education*: **6.3%** *(State: 9.8%)*
Percentage identified as homeless*: **0.03%** *(State: 0.48%)*
Percentage in Migrant*: **0.04%** *(State: 0.48%)*
Percentage in Gifted and Talented*: **5.4%** *(State: 7.5%)*

Suspensions as a percentage of enrollment: **1.9%** *(State: 7.4%)*
Expulsions as a percentage of enrollment: **0.4%** *(State: 0.3%)*

* *These are self-reported school data from the October 1st count. In fall 1996 Eagle County Charter Academy did not report. Charter school percentages do not include enrollment for this school in the base.*

FUNDING*

Average percentage of per pupil operating revenue-PPOR: **91.3%**
Range of percentage of PPOR: **80%-120%**

Average PPOR dollars received: **$4,010.84** *(State: $4,363.33)*
Range of PPOR dollars received: **$3,303-$6,460** *(State: $4,095-$10,085)*

* *Charter schools receive a percentage of Per Pupil Operating Revenue (PPOR) from their district as a revenue base. However, PPOR for districts is approximately two-thirds of total per pupil revenue.*

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Colorado Charter Schools Statistical Portrait
Historical Data

SCHOOLS	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Open:	2	14	24	32
Elementary:	1	5	8	4
Elementary/Middle:	0	2	5	14
Middle:	1	5	3	5
High:	0	0	3	3
K-12:	0	2	5	6
As a percentage of state schools:	0.1	1.0	1.7	2.1
Challenger Schools:	0	2	6	7
Schools of Excellence:	0	0	1	3
Charters Granted to:				
Parents/Teachers/Community:	1	12	20	27
Non-profits/Foundations:	0	1	2	2
For-profits:	0	0	0	1
Universities:	1	1	1	1
Cities:	0	0	1	1

STAFF*	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Number of teachers in full-time equivalents- FTE:	Not reported	118.7	254.2	393.3
Number of teachers:	Not reported	126	271	411
Percentage of racial/ethnic minorities:	Not reported	Not available	16.2	7.5
Percentage of males:	Not reported	Not available	22.9	20.0
Percentage of females:	Not reported	Not available	77.1	80.0
Average pupil/teacher ratio:	Not reported	19.8	16.8	17.6
Average selected** pupil/teacher ratio:	Not reported	20.4	17.4	18.6
Average salary:	Not reported	$25,608	$25,200	$26,781
Lowest salary:	Not reported	$16,020	$16,200	$17,000
Highest salary:	Not reported	$43,512	$46,990	$48,400
Average years experience:	Not reported	Not available	5.5	6.0
Percentage with master's degree or higher:	Not reported	Not available	25.8	26.3

** excludes specialized subject area special education Title I and Title 6 teachers*

* *In fall 1993 Academy Charter School and The Connect School did not report staff data. In fall 1996 Alpine Charter School did not report and P.S. 1 data were incomplete.*

STUDENTS	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Enrollment:	187	2,356	4,281	6,941
Lowest:	69	36	21	23
Highest:	118	460	505	783
Average:	94	168	178	217
As a percentage of district enrollment:	0.5	1.0	1.4	1.9
As a percentage of state enrollment:	0.03	0.4	0.7	1.0
Percentage of racial/ethnic minorities:	10.7	18.0	18.6	18.6
Percentage of males:	46.5	53.1	51.4	50.9
Percentage of females:	53.5	46.9	48.6	49.1
Suspensions as percentage of enrollment:	Not available	3.1	3.1	Not available
Expulsions as percentage of enrollment:	Not available	0.3	0.6	Not available
Percentage on free lunch:	2.14	10.53	10.39	13.87
Percentage in Title I*:	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.28
Percentage in English Language Proficiency Act*:	0.00	0.00	0.58	0.10
Percentage in Special Education*:	2.67	5.75	5.56	6.27
Percentage identified as homeless*:	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.03
Percentage in Migrant*:	0.00	0.00	0.12	0.04
Percentage in Gifted and Talented*:	0.00	7.70	5.14	5.42

* *These are self-reported school data from the October 1st count. In fall 1994 Community Involved Charter School did not report. In fall 1995 Clayton Charter School and Crestone Charter School did not report. In fall 1996 Eagle County Charter Academy did not report. Charter school percentages do not include enrollment for these schools in the base.*

FUNDING*	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97
Average percentage of PPOR:	90.0	86.1	89.8	91.3
Lowest percentage of PPOR:	80	80	80	80
Highest percentage of PPOR:	100	100	120	120
Average PPOR Dollars received	$3,471.60	$3,567.50	$3,846.98	$4,010.84
Lowest PPOR Dollars received	$2,911	$3,060	$3,198	$3,303
Highest PPOR Dollars received	$4,032	$4,636	$6,485	$6,460

* *Charter schools receive a percentage of Per Pupil Operating Revenue (PPOR) from their district as a revenue base. However, PPOR for districts is approximately two-thirds of total per pupil revenue.*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Evaluation Approach

The Colorado Charter Schools Act requires the State Board of Education to "compile the evaluations of charter schools received from local boards of education and to review information regarding the regulations and statutes from which charter schools were released under the waiver statute." In preparing the report, the state board is to "compare the performance of charter school students with the performance of ethnically and economically comparable groups of pupils in other public schools who are enrolled in academically comparable courses."

In response to this mandate, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) identified three evaluation issues:

1. Do charter school students attain high levels of learning and achievement?
2. How extensively and to what ends have the charter schools used the waiver statute and has the statute been sufficient to provide charter schools with the flexibility they need?
3. What are the costs of implementing charter schools and how do those compare with the costs of running conventional public schools?

Given the statutory evaluation mandate, CDE did not create or administer any new assessments or measures of student achievement for this evaluation. Instead, the evaluation is based on the student achievement data that is kept by the charter schools and reported to their sponsoring districts.

To provide an evaluation focused squarely on results, this first year evaluation study is limited to those fourteen schools that had been operating for a least a year (as of April 1996) and that had filed at least one annual school improvement plan as required by the accountability provisions of the Public School Finance Act.

The initial evaluation focus was limited to assessing student results in relation to the performance goals each charter school had specified in its charter application and subsequent contract with the sponsoring district. CDE later broadened this evaluation scope to include the performance goals articulated by the charter schools in their annual school improvement plans as well. This decision allowed the evaluation team to look at a broader range of assessment data. It also allowed for the evolution of the charter schools' performance goals, from the time their initial applications were developed through a time when the schools had been operational for several years.

The evaluation team used the following methods to collect data relevant to the evaluation questions:

- Review and analysis of charter school documents, including charter school applications and contracts, annual reports, school improvement plans and assessment results.

- Review of financial documents provided by charter schools.
- Questionnaire to charter school directors/administrators to determine impact of waivers.

The evaluation team expended significant time and effort in the process of trying to identify a comparison school for each charter school, in the same district, that could provide a fair basis for comparing student achievement results and costs. After reviewing all available information, it was apparent that the effort to generate a comparative analysis between charter schools and "comparison" public schools would be unproductive at best and misleading at worst. The primary reasons:

- The charter schools and their comparison schools are too diverse in terms of the performance goals they set, the assessment tools they use to measure student achievement and in their educational approaches. In short, the very diversity and autonomy that the Charter Schools Act was intended to promote is antithetical to direct comparisons.

- On the cost issues, comparisons were rendered impossible because only two of the sponsoring districts in the first year study maintain budget and accounting data at the school level. The rest of the districts were unable to provide accurate school-level budget data for the comparison schools.

Yet, accountability is central to the charter school concept. At the heart of charter schools is an explicit trade-off : better student results in return for greater freedom. This report tries to determine whether this central condition has been met by looking at whether charter schools have set explicit criteria for evaluation of student achievement and if they are collecting data to make their judgments accordingly.

There is no dearth of evaluation data. But there is not, at least at this point in time, a fair basis for comparing the performance of charter schools against one another or against their public school counterparts. In this evaluation study, the record of results of each charter school stands alone, to be measured against the school's own performance goals and aspirations.

As schools of choice, charter schools are subject to another form of accountability: the marketplace. Students enroll voluntarily in the schools and have the right to "vote with their feet" – to leave charter schools that are not meeting their needs. The effectiveness of charter schools can therefore be measured, in part, by demand for the schools, the satisfaction of students, parents and staff and by re-enrollment rates.

Characteristics of Colorado Charter Schools and Students

Size: The average enrollment is 200. Colorado Charter Schools are much smaller than their public school counterparts, but are larger, as a group, than charter schools nationally.

Student:Teacher Ratio: Twelve of the fourteen schools in the first year study (86%) have a student to teacher ratio of 20.1:1 or less. The other two schools (14%) have a student to teacher ratio of between 20.1:1 and 25:1.

Grade Level: The charter schools in the first year study, as a group, serve all grade levels. Schools with an elementary education focus are the most common. Six of the charter schools in the first year study (42%) serve elementary students or elementary and middle school students.

Student Characteristics: The worst fears of charter school critics have not been realized: Colorado charter schools are serving students of color, students who are educationally disadvantaged by poverty and students who are eligible for special education services. However, approximately 58% of the charter schools in the first year study serve a lower ratio of students of color than their sponsoring districts. In this regard, Colorado is the exception to a national trend that shows charter schools are serving a *more* underprivileged student population than conventional public schools.

Educational Approaches: The charter schools in the first year study exemplify diverse educational approaches.

Governance: Nine of the charter schools in the first year study (65%) have school-based governing boards that are comprised of a majority of parents.

Parent Involvement: Although this factor was not an explicit focus of the first year evaluation study, an extraordinary level of parent involvement is apparent from the data and documents that served as the basis for this report.

This evaluation focuses on the fourteen charter schools in the first year study. The Colorado Charter Schools 1996 Statistical Portrait is included in the Executive Summary to provide a brief statistical overview of all 32 of the charter schools that are currently operating.

Student Achievement Results

The goal of diverse schools inherent in the Charter Schools Act makes comparisons of student achievement among charter schools and between charter schools and their conventional public school counterparts problematic. Charter schools shape their own educational programs and set performance goals that are consistent with their distinctive approaches. The limited state assessments that will be made under the standards-based education legislation (93-1313) eventually may provide some comparable data to anchor the system as a whole, but back-to-basics schools will always measure different outcomes with different tools than alternative schools. And, while this difference is inconvenient in terms of comparison, it is very healthy in terms of choice, diversity, and innovation.

While comparative attempts to characterize the progress of the charter schools in the first year study are problematic, some kind of overall judgment about the record of these schools with respect to student achievement is valuable. In order to provide this overview, the evaluation team looked at all the student achievement data reported by the schools, in the context of the schools' performance goals, to conclude:

- All fourteen of the charter schools in the first year study have set performance goals.

- All fourteen of the charter schools in the first year study are attempting to measure student achievement as described in the performance goals. Some schools, such as Community of Learners (Durango District 9-R), Community Involved Charter School (Jefferson County School District) and the Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences (Pueblo School District 60) have devoted significant time to developing new assessment tools that are aligned with their individual school's educational approach.

- Six schools – Stargate (Adams 12 Five Star School District), Clayton (DPS), Academy Charter School (Douglas County School District), Excel (Durango 9-R), Eagle (Eagle County School District), and Jefferson Academy (Jefferson County School District) – have provided data that show they have met or exceeded a significant portion of their performance goals and are on track to meet the remaining goals.

  Five schools – Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12), Core Knowledge (Douglas County), Sci-Tech Academy (Jefferson County) Battle Rock (Montezuma Cortez School District) and Connect (Pueblo School District 70) – have provided data that show they have met or exceeded some of their performance goals and are making progress toward the remaining goals.

  Three schools – Community of Learners (Durango 9-R), Community Involved Charter School (Jefferson County), and Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences (Pueblo District 60) have not provided enough data regarding student achievement to support a determination that they are making progress toward their performance goals.

Charter School Revenue and Expenditures

Eight of fourteen schools in the charter school study (57%) use a non-district facility and pay rent from their operating budget. The charter schools incurred facility renovation costs in the range from $0 to $200,000.

Under the Colorado Charter Schools Act, sponsoring districts must fund the charter schools at a negotiated rate that is not less than 80% of the per pupil operating revenue (PPOR). PPOR is the funding for a district that represents the financial base of support for public education in that district, divided by the district's funded pupil count, minus funds transferred for the capital reserve fund, the insurance reserve fund or any other fund for the management of risk-related activities. The charter schools in the first year study negotiated funding rates with their sponsoring districts that ranged from 80% to 100%. Nine (65%) of the charter schools in the first year study receive funding at a level that is between 80% and 85% of their sponsoring district's PPOR.

In terms of revenue, all but one charter school depend heavily on the PPOR. Another public source of revenue for some charter schools is the federal allocation for special education. Some charter schools receive non-public support, including fees,

fundraising and grants.

The lion's share of charter school revenue is going into student specific expenditures (i.e. salaries and benefits for administrators, teachers, aides, substitutes; office expenses; instructional supports including books, computers, equipment and materials; staff development; and student/family support services). On average, the charter schools are spending approximately 82.5 % on student specific expenditures. The remaining 17.5 % is being spent on rent, utilities, repairs, maintenance, transportation, food, renovations, basic classroom equipment like chairs and desks, legal services, etc.

Use and Impact of Waivers by Colorado Charter Schools

The Colorado charter school law does not provide for automatic exemption of charter schools from most state laws or regulations and from local policies. Instead, the law extends to charter schools the operation of the same waiver provision that has been available to every public school district in Colorado since 1989. Charter schools have used the waiver provision extensively. Every charter school in the first year study sought at least one waiver and most schools pursued multiple waivers.

All of the charter schools sought a waiver of the Certificated Performance Evaluation Act to obtain more flexibility in evaluating certificated personnel and, in some cases, to tie pay to performance. Thirteen schools sought release from the statute related to teacher salary, employment and dismissal in favor of establishing at-will employment relationships with employees. Twelve schools sought a waiver of the statute relating to the employment and authority of principals in order to hire an administrator who does not hold a type D administrative certificate and/or to pursue an alternative management structure. Twelve schools also sought release from the statute concerning local board of education duties to ensure that the school's governing board would exercise authority over textbooks, curriculum, hiring and firing of staff and staff development issues.

This clear pattern of requests argues in favor of a "superwaiver" approach to releasing charter schools from those state laws and regulations that charter schools most commonly seek to waive. This approach would save both the charter schools and CDE the considerable time and effort involved in the waiver application development and hearing process. On the other hand, the evidence from the first year study is that the current waiver approach is adequate to provide charter schools with the flexibility they need to pursue their distinctive visions.

Part I - The Colorado Charter Schools Act: A Bold Experiment

In 1993, the Colorado General Assembly enacted Senate Bill 93-183, the Colorado Charter Schools Law, with broad bipartisan support. In the legislative declaration of the Act, the state articulated the basis for the law as follows:

- ◊ All Colorado children should attend schools that reflect high expectations and create conditions where those expectations can be met.
- ◊ The best education decisions are made by those who know the students best and who are responsible for implementing decisions and therefore, educators and parents have a right and a responsibility to participate in the education institutions that serve them.
- ◊ Different pupils learn differently and public school programs should be designed to fit the needs of individual students.
- ◊ There are parents, citizens and educators in Colorado who are willing and able to provide innovative programs educational techniques and environments, but who lack a channel through which to act.

The Act also spelled out these specific purposes of the Charter School law:

- To improve pupil learning by creating schools with high, rigorous standards for pupil performance.
- To increase learning opportunities for all pupils, with special emphasis on expanded learning experiences for students who are academically low-achieving.
- To encourage diverse approaches to learning and education and the use of different innovative, and proven teaching methods.
- To allow the development of different and innovative forms of measuring student learning and achievement.
- To create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site.
- To provide parents and pupils with expanded choices in the types of education opportunities that are available to students within the public school system.
- To encourage parental and community involvement with public schools.
- To hold charter schools accountable for meeting state board and school district content standards and to provide such schools with a method to change accountability systems.

Members of the general assembly recognized they were working in an arena that was new and full of potential, but that carried no guarantees. "In authorizing charter schools, it is the intent of the general assembly to create a legitimate avenue for parents, teachers and community members to take responsible risks and create new, innovative and more flexible ways of educating all children within the public education system. The general assembly seeks to create an atmosphere in Colorado's public school system where research and development in developing different learning opportunities is actively pursued."

Colorado was the third state to implement charter school legislation. When the Colorado law was adopted, national educational analysts characterized the model as a "strong" version of charter school legislation.[1]

The Debate Surrounding the Potential of Charter Schools as a Tool of Educational Reform

As legislators, in Colorado and throughout the nation, considered whether to establish charter schools, these pros and cons were debated:

Pros – Charter Schools will:

- Curtail bureaucracy, letting schools concentrate on producing educational results, not on compliance with regulations.
- Hold schools and teachers accountable for student performance.
- Provide incentives to school personnel by linking improved student achievement to the continuance of their jobs and of the school itself.
- Facilitate innovation in areas such as organizational structure, scheduling, staffing, curriculum and instruction and assessment.
- Increase parental involvement.
- Expand the range of educational options for students and professional options for teachers.
- Provide both competition and models that may spark districts to improve their own practices and schools.

Cons - Charter schools will:

- Siphon badly needed funds from public schools.
- Erode the hard-won collective bargaining and tenure rights of teachers.
- Become elite, pseudo-private academics supported by public funds, increasing the segregation of schools by race and socioeconomic class.
- Do little more than duplicate current reform efforts. Innovation is already abundant in public schools.

These arguments, both pro and con, provide a useful context and screen for the descriptive evaluation material contained in this report.

[1] Berlien, LouAnn. *Charter Schools: Initial Findings*. Education Commission of the States, 1996.

The Process for Obtaining a Charter in Colorado

The Colorado Charter School Act, Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-30.5-101, allows any group of parents, teachers and/or community members to develop a charter application. Only local boards of education can grant charters. The application process defined in the Colorado law is rigorous, requiring applicants to set out:

- A mission statement, goals, objectives and performance goals for students in the school.
- Evidence that an adequate number of parents, teachers and students support the formation of the charter school.
- A detailed description of the school's educational program, pupil performance standards and curriculum, which must meet or exceed any content standards adopted by the school district in which the charter school is located and which must be designed to enable each student to achieve the standards.
- A description of the charter school's plan for evaluating student performance, including the types of assessments and a timeline for meeting the school's performance goals.
- Evidence that the charter school's plan is economically sound for both the charter school and the sponsoring district, a proposed budget and a description of the annual audit process.
- A description of the governance and operation of the charter school.
- An explanation of the relationships that will exist between the proposed charter school and its employees.
- An agreement between the parties regarding their respective legal liability and applicable insurance coverage.
- A description of how the charter school plans to meet the transportation needs of its students.
- A description of the school's enrollment policy.

A charter application, once approved by a local school district, serves as the basis for a contract between the charter school and the local board of education. The contract includes all agreements between the charter school and the sponsoring district regarding the release of the school from local district policies. The charter application also contains all requests for release from the operation of state law or regulations. These requests must be made jointly by the charter school and the local board of education.

Sponsoring districts can approve a charter for a period not to exceed five years. Charters are renewable, upon reapplication by the school to the sponsoring district.

As of January 1, 1997, there were 32 charter schools operating in the state of Colorado, enrolling about 6,700 students.

The Appeal Process

The Colorado Charter Schools Act provides a process for appeal to the State Board of Education of a local board of education decision to grant or deny a charter. The State Board has the authority to review the decision of the local board and uphold it or remand it back to the local board for further consideration. If the local board denies the charter upon remand, that decision also is subject to appeal to the State Board.

The State Board applies this standard of review: whether the decision of the local board was "contrary to the best interests of the pupils, school district or community." Timelines are built into the Act to keep the review and appeal process on track.

As of March 1997, the State Board has heard 50 appeals under the Colorado Charter Schools Act. Of this total number, the State Board has:

⇒ upheld 21 local board of education decisions
⇒ remanded 13 local decisions back to the local board of education for reconsideration,
⇒ ordered the establishment of one charter school,
⇒ overturned one local board revocation of a charter,
⇒ vacated one hearing, and
⇒ dismissed 13 appeals.

Part II - The Evaluation of the Colorado Charter Schools

The Evaluation Questions

The Colorado Charter Schools Act requires the State Board of Education to "compile the evaluations of charter schools received from local boards of education and to review information regarding the regulations and statutes from which charter schools were released under the waiver statute." In preparing the report, the state board is to "compare the performance of charter school students with the performance of ethnically and economically comparable groups of pupils in other public schools who are enrolled in academically comparable courses."

In response to this mandate, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) identified three evaluation issues:

1. Do charter school students attain high levels of learning and achievement?
2. How extensively and to what ends have the charter schools used the waiver statute and has the statute been sufficient to provide charter schools with the flexibility they need?
3. What are the costs of implementing charter schools and how do those compare with the costs of running conventional public schools?

The Evaluation Model

Given the statutory evaluation mandate, CDE did not create or administer any new assessments or measures of student achievement for this evaluation. Instead, the evaluation is based on the student achievement data that is kept by the charter schools and reported to their sponsoring districts.

In April 1996, CDE contracted with the Clayton Foundation, in partnership with the University of Colorado - Denver's Center for Human Investment Policy (CHIP), to prepare an evaluation report.

In both intent and operation, the Colorado Charter Schools Act is results-oriented. To provide an evaluation focused squarely on results, the evaluation team recommended to CDE that the first year evaluation study be limited to those fourteen schools that had been operating for at least a year (as of spring 1996) and that had filed at least one annual report under the State Accountability Act. (The second year evaluation study will follow these fourteen schools and also include all other charter schools that have operated for at least a year. The third year evaluation will follow the schools included in the first two studies as well as all other charter schools that have operated for at least a year.)

The initial evaluation focus was limited to assessing student results in relation to the performance goals each charter school had specified in its charter application and subsequent contract with the sponsoring district. CDE later broadened this evaluation scope to include the performance goals articulated by the charter schools in their annual school improvement plans as well. This decision allowed the evaluation team to

look at a broader range of assessment data. It also allowed for the evolution of the charter schools' performance goals, from the point in time when the initial charter applications were developed through a period when the schools had been operational for several years.

Data Collection

The evaluation team used the following methods to collect data relevant to the evaluation questions:

1. Review and analysis of charter school documents. The evaluation team reviewed the charter applications, charter contracts, annual reports, annual school improvement plans, and actual test reports on file at CDE for each charter school. Using this information, the evaluation team created an individual data matrix for each school. A sample data matrix is included in the Appendix. The team sent the matrices to charter school directors/administrators and asked them to confirm or correct the data included and to provide any additional data related to assessments of student performance. Most of the schools reported that results for the 1995-96 school year would not be available until late fall, 1996. CDE decided to postpone the release of the report in order to obtain complete and current information. A revised data matrix was sent out to the schools again in November for verification.

2. Review of financial documents provided by charter schools. The charter schools provided "actual" operating budgets for the 1995-96 school year to the evaluation team. The review focused on the 1995-96 year in order to avoid the complications associated with trying to extract operating expenses from start-up expenses during the first year of the schools' operation.

3. Questionnaire to determine impact of waivers. The evaluation team reviewed the written waiver requests jointly submitted to the State Board of Education by the charter schools and their sponsoring districts as well as minutes from State Board of Education meetings in which those requests were discussed and decided. A customized waiver questionnaire was developed for each charter school and sent to the principal/administrator for completion. In some cases, follow-up telephone interviews were conducted to clarify responses to the questionnaire. A sample waiver questionnaire is included in the Appendix.

The Evaluation Challenge: The Tension between Autonomy and Accountability

The evaluation team expended significant time and effort in the process of trying to identify a comparison school for each charter school, in the same district, that could provide a fair basis for comparing student achievement results and costs. Criteria for identifying comparison schools included grade level, free lunch participation (as a proxy for poverty), ethnicity of students and special education participation. It was not possible to match on the criteria of school size because, as a rule, the charter schools are much smaller than their public schools counterparts. The evaluation team requested assessment information from the comparison schools as well as site-specific

budget information. A more detailed description of the methodology used in identifying the comparison schools is available upon request from CDE.

After reviewing all available information, it was apparent that the effort to generate a comparative analysis of charter schools and their comparison public schools would be unproductive at best and misleading at worst. The reasons:

- The charter schools and their comparison schools were too diverse in terms of the performance goals they set, the assessment tools they used to measure student achievement and in their educational approaches. In short, the very diversity and autonomy that the Charter Schools Act was intended to promote was antithetical to direct comparisons.

- On the cost issues, comparisons were rendered impossible because only two of the sponsoring districts in the first year study maintain budget and accounting data at the school level. The rest of the districts were unable to provide accurate school-level budget data for the comparison schools.

- In Colorado, districts (and semi-autonomous charter schools) do not necessarily use the apply the same definition to calculating mobility or attendance rates. Therefore even on these indirect measures of student achievement, the tools to make direct comparisons across districts (and across charter schools) simply were not available.

Yet, accountability is central to the charter school concept. At the heart of the Charter Schools Act is an explicit trade-off : better student results in return for greater freedom. This study examines if this central condition has been met by looking at whether charter schools have set explicit criteria for the evaluation of student achievement, and, if they are collecting data to make their judgments accordingly.

As discussed at length in the section on student achievement, each of the Colorado charter schools in the first year study has created a record of results that interested community members or potential patrons can examine to evaluate both the school's educational approach and its effectiveness. There is no dearth of evaluation data.

But there is not, at least at this point in time, a fair basis for comparing the performance of charter schools against one another or against their public school counterparts. In this evaluation study, the record of results of each charter school stands alone, to be measured against the school's own performance goals.

It is important to note that as schools of choice, charter schools are subject to another form of accountability: the marketplace. Students enroll voluntarily in the schools and have the right to "vote with their feet" – to leave charter schools that are not meeting their needs. The effectiveness of charter schools can therefore be measured, in part, by demand for the schools, the satisfaction of students, parents and staff and by re-enrollment rates.

How Standards-Based Education Will Contribute to Future Evaluation Efforts

In 1993, the Colorado General Assembly adopted a standards-driven system of education with the passage of H.B. 1313. This legislation, which enjoyed strong bipartisan support, requires all local school districts to establish clearly defined content standards in reading, writing, math, geography, science and history. Standards are statement of what students should know and be able to do at various points in their academic careers. The law allows each district to establish its own standards, but these standards must be as rigorous as – that is, "meet or exceed" – a set of model content standards adopted by the State Board of Education.

All districts were to have completed this process before January 1, 1997. January 1997 is also the deadline for districts to finalize their implementation plans, outlining how they intend to redesign curriculum, assessment and professional development around the new standards. These commitments and timetables will be incorporated as a sort of performance contract in each district's accreditation plan.

The legislation requires the state to administer standards-based proficiency tests each year. This new state assessment program is scheduled to be phased in beginning in Spring 1997 with a reading and writing assessment for every 4th grade student. Other grade levels and subjects may be added in future years. Once the system is in place, it will enhance the state's capacity to make comparative judgments regarding achievement toward content standards among charter schools and between charter schools and conventional public schools.

PART III - CHARACTERISTICS OF COLORADO CHARTER SCHOOLS AND THEIR STUDENTS

The fourteen charter schools in the first year study served 2,856 students during the 1995-96 school year. This section looks at some key characteristics of the Colorado charter schools and the students they serve, in the context of data about national charter school trends.

School Size /Class Size

Table 1 - Size of Charter Schools in First Year Study

SIZE	Number	Schools (Sponsoring District)
Under 100	3 (21.5%)	Battle Rock (Montezuma-Cortez) - 24 Community of Learners (Durango 9-R) - 60 Sci-Tech (Jefferson County) - 99
100-200	5 (36%)	Clayton (DPS) - 105 Connect (Pueblo 70) - 111 Eagle (Eagle County) - 128 Excel (Durango 9-R) - 165 Stargate (Adams 12 Five Star) - 175
201-300	2 (14%)	Core Knowledge (Douglas County)- 210 Jefferson (Jefferson County) - 227
301-400	3 (21.5%)	Academy Charter (Douglas County) - 315 Pueblo School Arts/Sciences (Pueblo 60) - 357 Community Involved (Jefferson County) - 375
500+	1 (7%)	Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12) - 505

Data Source: Colorado Department of Education, as of "count day" (October) 1995.

Table 2 - Student:Teacher Ratio for Charter Schools in the First Year Study

STUDENT: TEACHER RATIO	Number	Schools (Sponsoring District)
Less than 10:1	1 (7%)	Excel (Durango 9-R) 8.3:1 (16.1:1)
10:1 to 15:0	4 (29%)	Clayton (DPS) 11.7:1 (19.7:1) Community of Learners (Durango 9-R) 12:1 (16.1:1) Pueblo School Arts/Sciences (Pueblo District 60) 14.9:1 (18.8:1) Academy Charter (Douglas County) 15.0: 1 (18.2:1)
15:1 to 20.0	7 (50%)	Eagle County Charter (Eagle County) 16.0:1 (16.3:1) Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12 Five Star) 16.3:1 (19.9:1) Jefferson Academy (Jefferson County) 18.9:1 (21.3:1) Core Knowledge (Douglas County) 19.1:1 (18.2:1) Stargate (Adams 12 Five Star) 19.4:1 (19.9:1) Community Involved (Jefferson County) 19.7:1 (21.3:1) Sci-Tech (Jefferson County) 19.8:1 (21.3:1)
Over 20:1	2 (14%)	Connect (Pueblo District 70) 22.2:1 (19.8:1) Battle Rock (Montezuma-Cortez) 24.0:1 (17.6:1)

Data Source: Colorado Department of Education, as of "count day" (October) 1995.

Nationally, the numbers of students enrolled in charter schools range from a low of 11 to more than 1,200. On average, existing charter schools are every small. Within the six largest charter school states (Arizona, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota), 42% of the charter schools have an enrollment of less than 100 students.

Charter school researchers offer two explanations for this fact. First, with the exception of Massachusetts, charter schools do not have access to local bond funds for the construction or purchase of school facilities. Therefore, most charter schools secure facilities in spaces that are small in comparison to many traditional school facilities and campuses. Secondly, and perhaps, more importantly, many charter schools are established on the premise that small class sizes and school populations are more conducive to student learning. Although budgetary constraints are often cited by conventional public schools as the reason for not creating smaller schools, charter schools are findings ways to accomplish this, often with significantly less funding than other public schools. Private contracting for certain services, as well as a focus on a

specific mission, appear to be key ingredients of this strategy. For example, charter schools are not supporting a large array of electives or athletic programs that often pull funds from core academic classes.[2]

Grade Level

Table 3 - Grade Levels Served by Colorado Charter Schools

GRADE LEVEL	Number	Schools (Sponsoring District)
Elementary	4 (28%)	Clayton (DPS) - preK-3; Stargate (Adams 12) - 1-5; Jefferson Academy (Jefferson County) - K-6; Battle Rock (Montezuma Cortez) - preK-6
Elementary/Middle	2 (14%)	Core Knowledge (Douglas County) - K-7; Academy Charter (Douglas County) - K-8
Middle	3 (21.5%)	Eagle (Eagle County) - 5-8; Connect (Pueblo District 70) - 6-8; Community of Learners (Durango 9-R) - 6-9
Middle/Secondary	2 (14%)	Excel (Durango 9-R) - 6-11; Sci-Tech (Jefferson County) - 7-12
All School	3 (21.5%)	Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12) - K-12; Community Involved (Jefferson Cnty) - preK-12; Pueblo School for the Arts/Sciences (Pueblo District 60) - K-10

Nationally, elementary level charter schools are much more common than other grade levels. Within the six largest charter school states (Arizona, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota), 34% of charter schools in operation as of December 1995 were elementary schools. An additional 12% served all levels (K-12) and 20% serve students in grades K-8.

[2] Ibid.

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

In Colorado, as in other states, charter school critics argued that charter schools would "cream off" the best and the brightest students and would not serve a diverse population. Unfortunately, in many schools through the nation, students who are members of racial/ethnic minorities or who are from low socioeconomic backgrounds underachieve academically.

Data from the first year study show that Colorado charter schools, as a whole, are not serving an elite population of students. Three schools (21%) in the first year study serve approximately the same percentage of students of color and another three (21%) serve a greater percentage than their sponsoring districts.[3]

Yet, the record of Colorado charter schools in this regard trails national trends. Several national reports have concluded that charter schools are serving a more diverse and underprivileged student population than conventional public schools.[4]

In the following table, the percentage of students eligible for the federal free lunch program is used as a proxy for poverty. However, many charter schools in Colorado (as well as nationally) do not participate in this federal program. As a result, data on the economic status of charter school students is not complete.

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[3] In this context, it is noteworthy that a high percentage of the state's total population of disadvantaged students and students of color reside in the City and County of Denver. Only one charter school sponsored by the Denver Public Schools is included in the first year study. That school, Clayton Charter School, serves more students of color and disadvantaged students than the district average.

[4] *Charter Schools: Initial Findings*; Buechler, Mark. *Charter Schools: Legislation and Results After Four Years*. Indiana Education Policy Center, 1996.; Finn, Chester, Bierlein, LouAnn, Manno, Bruno. *Charter Schools in Action: A First Look*. The Hudson Institute, 1996.

Table 4 - Comparison Between Charter Schools and Their Sponsoring Districts on Key Student Demographic Traits

DISTRICT Charter School	% students eligible for free lunch	% students of color	% students eligible for special education services
State of Colorado	***15.6%***	***27.5%***	***10.5%***
Adams 12 Five Star District	***16.8%***	***23.9%***	***11.9%***
Academy of Charter Schools	16.4%	20.2%	6.7%
Stargate	3.0%	11.3%	not available
Denver Public Schools	***53.1%***	***72.9%***	***12.3%***
Clayton	68.8%	91.5%	5.7%
Douglas County School District	***2.0%***	***6.5%***	***8.8%***
Academy Charter	6.7%	6.5%	13.3%
Core Knowledge	.0%	5.1%	1.9%
Eagle County School District	***15.4%***	***27.8%***	***9.2%***
Eagle County Charter	program not offered	15.6%	8.1%
Durango School District 9-R	***14.4%***	***13.8%***	***9.4%***
Community of Learners	16.7%	20.0%	26.6%
Excel	1.2%	11.3%	4.2%
Montezuma-Cortez School Dist.	***33.4%***	***31.2%***	***10.5%***
Battle Rock	program not offered	6.0%	N/A
Jefferson County School District	***9.9%***	***13.4%***	***9.0%***
Community Involved	20.8%	17.9%	N/A
Jefferson Academy	1.3%	6.2%	4.4%
Sci-Tech Charter	7.1%	8.0%	12.1%
Pueblo School District 60	***42%***	***54.6%***	***9.1%***
Pueblo School Arts-Sciences	29.4%	53.5%	3.1%
Pueblo School District 70	***20.1%***	***25.3%***	***8.1%***
Connect Charter School	program not offered	25.2%	N/A

Data Source: Colorado Department of Education, as of "count day" (October 1995)

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Educational Program

The diversity of the educational approaches being offered by Colorado charter schools is apparent from a review of their distinctive components (see Table 5). Whether all of these approaches are "innovative" is a more subjective question. Virtually all of the approaches listed in the table are being tried in regular schools as well as charter schools.

But, instructional practices that are routine in some districts may be highly innovative in others. Also, the same approach may play out very differently in different schools, depending on the school's culture and policy context and on the level of support for reform. Therefore, while the type of educational innovation in charter schools may not be different from conventional schools, the duration and intensity of implementation may be. Finally, while innovation is one of the main objectives of the Charter Schools Act, improved student achievement is the overriding goal. Nothing in the spirit of the Act prevents charter school operators from pursuing any approach that will improve the performance of students.

One final observation is of note in this context. In the areas of governance, parent and community involvement and employment policies, the charter schools, as a group, are operating in ways that are dramatically different from, and apparently more inclusive than, most conventional public schools.

Please note that parent involvement is not included in the table of distinctive components because it is common to all of the charter schools.

Table 5: Overview of Distinctive Components of Educational Programs

Distinctive Components of Educational Program	Academy of Charter Schools	Stargate	Clayton	Academy Charter School	Core Knowledge	Comm. of Learners	Excel	Eagle	Comm. Involved	Jefferson	Sci-Tech	Battle Rock	Pueblo School Arts and Sciences	Connect
Thematic/Interdisciplinary Instruction		X		X		X			X		X	X	X	
Technology as a major focus							X					X		X
Core knowledge curriculum	X			X	X			X		X				
Community as classroom		X				X			X			X		X
Individualized learning plans		X		X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
Multi-age groupings		X	X			X						X		
Focus on specific subject matter (e.g. arts, science/math)											X		X	
Character instruction				X					X					
Hands-on/Active learning		X	X	X		X			X			X		X
Serve disadvantaged youth			X											
Extended academic day											X			
Before or after school programs		X	X											X
Foreign language instruction at all grades		X			X									
Block or other non-traditional scheduling						X		X	X		X			
Year-Round Calendar						X								
Student choice in educational delivery									X		X			

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Governance

Charter schools in Colorado determine their own governance structure. These governing bodies have authority over curriculum, personnel, budget and all other aspects of the school, under the terms and conditions of the charter contract entered with the sponsoring district. Among the schools in the first year study, parents hold the majority on the governing boards in nine (66%). Table 6 summarizes the various board compositions being used by the charter schools.

Table 6 - Composition of Charter School Governing Boards

Governing Board Membership	Number	Charter Schools
Parents/Staff/Community	***9***	
• With equal representation among parents and staff	3	Clayton (DPS); Pueblo School Arts/Sciences,(Pueblo 60)*; Sci-Tech (Jefferson County)
• With a parent majority	5	Core Knowledge (Douglas County), Connect (Pueblo 70), Jefferson Academy (Jefferson County), Stargate (Adams 12) , Eagle (Eagle County)
• With a staff majority	1	Community Involved (Jefferson County)
Parents/Community	***3***	
• With a parent majority	2	Battle Rock (Montezuma Cortez), Community of Learners (Durango 9-R)
• With community majority	1	Excel (Durango 9-R)
Parents Only	***2***	Academy Charter School (Douglas County); Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12)

Data Source: Colorado Charter Schools

* Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences has a unique governance structure, reflecting the formal organizational alliance between School District 60 and the University of Southern Colorado.

Parent Involvement

Although parent involvement in charter schools was not an explicit focus of the first year evaluation study, it is apparent from information reported throughout this document that the degree of parent involvement in charter schools is extraordinary. This is not to say that all charter school parents can and want to participate. But many do and at high levels of responsibility and commitment.

The implications of creating new ways to engage parents are major. Research has shown that parental involvement has a profound effect on student achievement. Students whose parents are involved in their education are more enthusiastic and confident learners and achieve at higher levels. Similarly, schools where parents are involved are more effective at meeting the needs of all students.[5]

Charter School Participation in Schools of Excellence Program

All Colorado public schools may choose to participate in the John Irwin Colorado Schools of Excellence Program, sponsored by the Colorado State Board of Education, the Colorado State Legislature and the Department of Education. This program recognizes schools for improving graduation rates and student achievement or for sustaining high levels of student performance in these areas. The program requires a variety of student performance indicators to provide a reliable picture of achievement for all student groups. Schools have the opportunity to document exemplary practices and provide reliable information regarding community satisfaction with educational programs and progress. The program recognizes two categories of achievement. Challenger Schools apply for their status once and then update information about their student indicators periodically. Schools of Excellence must apply annually and must have at least two years of data showing progress toward their performance goals.

Among the fourteen schools in the first year study, seven are ***Challenger Schools***:

- Academy Charter School (Douglas County)
- Core Knowledge Charter School (Douglas County)
- Eagle County Charter Academy (Eagle County)
- Community Involved Charter School (Jefferson County)
- Jefferson Academy Charter School (Jefferson County)
- Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences (Pueblo District 60) and
- The Connect School (Pueblo District 70)

and three are ***Schools of Excellence***:

- Academy Charter School (Douglas County)
- Eagle County Charter Academy (Eagle County) and
- Jefferson Academy Charter School (Jefferson County).

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[5] Henderson, Anne T. and Berla, Nancy, Editors. *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Crucial to Education*. The Family Resource Coalition, 1996.

Part IV - STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT DATA

Assessment Tools Used by the Charter Schools

The assessment tools used by charter schools are different, depending on the school's educational approach as well as its articulated performance goals. Table 7 provides an overview of these diverse tools, organized into three categories:

- **Norm-referenced tests** are tests that measure the relative performance of the individual or group by comparison with the performance of other individuals or groups taking the same test.

- **Criterion-referenced tests** are tests whose scores are interpreted by reference to well-defined domains of content or behaviors, rather than by reference to the performance of some other group.

- **Performance assessments** are tests that measure ability by assessing open-ended responses or by asking the respondent to complete a task, produce a response or demonstrate a skill.

Table 7: Overview of Assessment Tools Used by Charter Schools

Assessment Tools Used to Measure Student Achievement	Academy of Charter Schools	Stargate	Clayton	Academy Charter School	Core Knowledge	Comm. Learners	Excel	Eagle	Comm Involved	Jefferson	Sci-Tech	Battle Rock	Pueblo School of Arts and Sciences	Connect
Norm-Referenced Tests														
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)	x			x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
California Achievement Test (CAT)		x												
Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS)				x	x									
McCarthy Scales of Dev. Abilities			x											
Science Research Associates (SRA) Survey of Basic Skills													x	
Criterion-Referenced Tests														
Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP)				x	x									
Stanford Achievement Test														x
Stanford Writing Assessment						x	x							
Stanford Diagnostic Reading Assessment								x						
CAP Assessment of Writing							x							
District Content Standards/Curriculum Assessment							x	x		x				
Brigance-CTBS			x											
Woodcock Johnson			x											
High/Scope Child Observation Record			x	-										
Performance Assessments														
Individual Learning Programs						x			x	x			x	
Portfolios									x			x	x	
Student Exhibits						x								x
Work Sampling System			x									x		

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School Profiles - An Individual Approach to Reviewing Student Achievement Results

At the present time, the fairest basis on which to evaluate charter schools is their demonstrated progress toward the performance goals they articulated in their charter application and in subsequent school improvement plans. This section contains profiles of each of the fourteen charter schools in the first year study.

The first page of the profile summarizes key demographic data about the school and lists the school's mission, educational approach, governance structure and performance goals. (CDE provided the demographic data, with the exception of the wait list, as of fall 1995. The charter schools self-reported the wait list as of the end of the 1995-96 school year. The evaluation team derived the other information from the charter school application.) The second page summarizes the assessment data and other performance indicators collected by the school.

In using the data in the school profiles, the reader might want to consider the following issues and cautions:

1. Did the school set high goals for student achievement? Unless the goals themselves are worthy, their accomplishment does not necessarily translate into improved learning results for students.

2. Are the goals consistent with the school's mission and distinctive educational approach?

3. Is the school using assessment tools that are aligned with its goals (that is, are the assessments used capable of measuring the goals)? In this regard, recognize that it is much easier for a core knowledge school to identify assessments that can measure their curriculum, than a school that is pursuing a less structured program. For example, most core knowledge tests would consider norm-referenced tests to be a fair indicator of their progress. Alternative schools would not.

4. Consider the students whom the school serves. Schools that serve many students who are at risk of underachievement, because of economic disadvantage, race/ethnicity or special needs face a very different set of challenges that those schools who do not.

5. Consider the assessment data in terms of growth, and not just at a particular point in time. The same score can indicate marked improvement in one school and static performance in another, simply because the schools may start from dramatically different baselines.

6. No single test can provide a full picture of a student's progress or learning. Assessment experts agree that an assessment program should use an array of different tests to measure different dimensions of student learning.

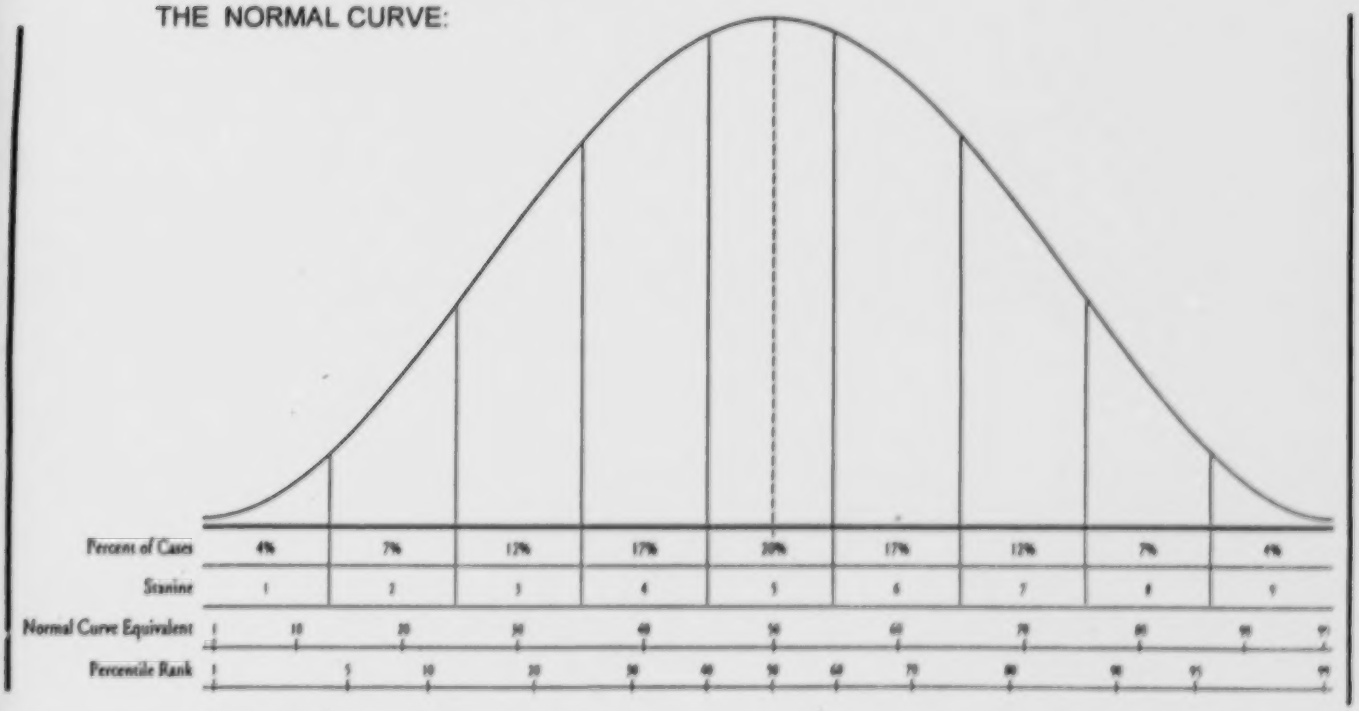
7. As noted on their school profiles, Clayton Charter School (DPS), Community of Learners (Durango 9-R) and Community Involved Charter School (Jefferson County) administer the ITBS at the request of their districts, but do not accept the results as valid in light of the non-alignment between this assessment and the schools' educational program.

8. The method by which the attendance rate is calculated is not uniform across all the schools.

9. Schools may use different versions or subparts of the same test. Read the description of the test with care.

10. Assessment results from the same or similar tests can be reported in different ways (stanines, means, percentile ranks.) The chart below shows the relationship among these various ways of reporting data.

THE NORMAL CURVE:



Stanines - show how a student performs in relation to a group. Stanines range from a low of 1 to a high of 9, with 5 meaning average.
Normal Curve Equivalent - is derived from percentile rank and is used primarily for research or for averaging scores.
Percentile Rank - is the rank standing of an individual or group in relation to other pupils. A percentile rank of 60 indicates that students scored better than 60% of students in the norm group and that 40% of students in the norm group scored as well or better.
Grade Level Equivalent - is the grade at which a pupil could be expected to get a particular raw score. A grade equivalent of 3.6, for example, signifies third grade, sixth month.

Some General Conclusions

As discussed throughout this report, efforts to characterize the progress of the charter schools in the first year study, as a whole, are problematic. Yet, some kind of overall judgment about the record of these schools with respect to student achievement is valuable. To provide this overview, the evaluation team looked at the total information contained in the school profiles, in the context of each school, to reach these conclusions:

- All fourteen of the charter schools in the first year study have set performance goals.

- All fourteen of the charter schools in the first year study are attempting to measure student achievement as described in the performance goals. Some schools, such as Community of Learners (Durango 9-R), Community Involved Charter School (Jefferson County) and the Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences (Pueblo District 60) have devoted significant time to developing new assessment tools that are aligned with their individual school's educational approach and with district content standards.

- Six schools – Stargate (Adams 12), Clayton (DPS), Academy Charter School (Douglas County), Excel (Durango 9-R), Eagle (Eagle County), and Jefferson Academy (Jefferson County) – have provided data that show they have met or exceeded a significant portion of their performance goals and are on track to meet the remaining goals.

  Five schools – Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12), Core Knowledge (Douglas County), Sci-Tech (Jefferson County), Battle Rock (Montezuma Cortez) and Connect (Pueblo District 70) – have provided data that show they have met or exceeded some of their performance goals and are making progress toward the remaining goals.

  Three schools – Community of Learners (Durango 9-R), Community Involved Charter School (Jefferson County) and Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences (Pueblo District 60) have not provided enough data regarding student achievement to support a determination that they are making progress toward their performance goals.

ACADEMY OF CHARTER SCHOOLS

Sponsoring District: Adams 12 Five Star School District

LOCATION: Adams County (suburban) **ENROLLMENT:** 505
GRADE LEVELS: K-12 **WAITING LIST:** not provided
STUDENT:TEACHER RATIO: 16.5:1 **OPENING DATE:** Fall 1994

STUDENT PROFILE:

White:	79.8%	**Free lunch eligibility:**	16.4%
Asian:	1.6%	**Special education:**	6.7%
Black:	1.8%		
Hispanic:	15.8%		
Native Am:	1.0%		

MISSION: Our mission is to offer students, kindergarten through 12th grade, having a variety of learning and communication styles, the opportunity, within a safe and structured environment, to excel at a challenging course of study through testing, placement and quality instruction that develops his or her talents in areas such as phonics, literature, penmanship, writing, speech, language, logic, civics, history, geography, research and computer skills, math, scientific methods, arts, music and physical education. We recognize self-esteem comes with accomplishment and achievement; therefore, we will provide opportunity for personal growth through academic achievement. We view parental satisfaction with our program and accomplishments as a gage (sic) of our success; therefore, we require active parent involvement.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: The Academy of Charter Schools offers "back-to-basics" curriculum and instruction and emphasizes parental involvement.

GOVERNANCE: The Governing Board, comprised of seven parents, makes policy decisions for the school. The Manager makes day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Students who have attended Academy for three years or more will score in the 65-75 percentile on nationally-normed tests.
- Average scores for new students will be raised by 5 points in the first three years of their education at the Academy of Charter Schools.
- The school will attain an attendance rate of at least 95%.
- Parents and community members will contribute over 5,000 hours of volunteer time annually.
- 90% of parents, staff, community, students will be satisfied with the school.
- Every graduating student will be prepared for college (college remediation courses will not be necessary).
- 85% or more of students who have attended Academy more than two years will graduate.

MEASURE	1994-95	1995-96
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) (National percentile rank for both fall/spring of designated school year)	***Reading*** ***Language*** K-6 42/53 36/51 7-8 50/61 39/51 9-11 47/49 40/45 School 46/56 38/51 (all students) ***Math*** ***Soc. Studies*** K-6 38/52 42/48 7-8 42/60 49/61 9-11 40/52 45/50 School 40/55 45/53 ***Science*** ***Resources*** K-6 44/53 36/47 7-8 57/64 46/55 9-11 51/54 47/51 School 50/58 42/51 ***Composite*** K-6 40/51 7-8 47/60 9-11 46/51 School 43/54	***Reading*** ***Language*** K-6 46/59 46/59 7-8 60/64 51/59 9-11 50/52 44/53 School 50/59 38/51 (all students) ***Math*** ***Soc. Studies*** K-6 41/58 44/50 7-8 51/59 55/59 9-11 45/55 50/61 School 44/59 48/54 ***Science*** ***Resources*** K-6 50/57 43/53 7-8 58/59 52/57 9-11 55/57 47/56 School 53/57 47/55 ***Composite*** K-6 43/55 7-8 55/61 9-11 47/54 School 46/56
Parent Survey on Teacher Performance (on 5 point scale, 5 being the highest)	Overall Score - 4.13	Overall Score - 4.35
Parent Involvement (number of volunteer hours)		Over 10,000
Attendance Rate	94.4%	92.7%

STARGATE CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Adams Twelve Five Star School District

LOCATION: Eastlake (suburban)
GRADE LEVELS: 1-6
STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO: 25:1
ENROLLMENT: 175
WAITING LIST: 50
OPENING DATE: Fall 1994

STUDENT PROFILE: **White:** 88.7%, **Asian:** 3.6%, **Hispanic:** 7.7%
Free lunch eligibility: 3%
Special education: 5.1%

MISSION: We believe each child is entitled to an education commensurate with his/her ability to learn. Our purpose is to create a charter school with multi-district enrollment to serve those children, ages 3-18, whose academic and/or intellectual abilities require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program. This differentiated educational program will be made regardless of disability, race, creed, color or gender, national origin, religion or ancestry so that these children can realize their contribution to self and society.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Stargate uses District 12 curriculum, but teachers use different and innovative instructional strategies for gifted students. The school features foreign language at all levels, personal learning plans, multi-aged classrooms and direct parent involvement.

GOVERNANCE: The Governance Council (comprised of three parents, two community members and two teachers) makes policy for the school. The school's lead teacher and business manager are responsible for day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Assure that every student is working at his or her ability level in reading and math based on individual CAT-V and performance level assessments.
- Meet or exceed state model content standards.
- Improve student science content and process scores as measured by CAT-V and District performance assessment. (for 1996-97 school year)
- To maintain or exceed an attendance rate of 95%.
- To achieve a 95% retention rate.
- Continue high level of parent satisfaction.

MEASURE	1994-95	1995-96
California Achievement Test (CAT-V) (national percentile rank) Test was administered to 3rd grade students.	Math: 90 Reading: 91 Sciences: 92 Social Sciences: 84 Language: 91 Overall: 91	Math: 93 Reading: 91 Sciences: 91 Social Sciences: 84 Language: 90 Overall: 94
District Curriculum Assessment - 4th grade (% of students scoring at Level 3 - high proficiency)	***Stargate /District*** Math content 60.9/ 20.6 Math prob. solving communication 26.1/ 5.9 Reading 73.9/ 28.7 Writing 47.8/ 23.6 Spelling 87.0/ 55.4	
Parent Involvement (Number of volunteer hours)	3,500	9,000
Parent Satisfaction (% expressing satisfaction with school and with their children's progress)	90%	80-90%
Attendance	96%	95.7%

CLAYTON CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Denver Public Schools

LOCATION: Denver (urban/core city)
GRADE LEVELS: preK-3
STUDENT:TEACHER RATIO: 11.7:1

ENROLLMENT: 106
WAITING LIST: not reported
OPENING DATE: Fall 1994

STUDENT PROFILE:

White:	8.5%
Asian:	1.9%
Black:	65.1%
Hispanic:	24.5%

Free lunch eligibility: 68.8%
Special education: 5.7%

MISSION: The mission of the Clayton Charter School is to provide a comprehensive, developmentally appropriate early childhood educational program to enable children at risk, as defined by the Colorado Charter Schools Act, to achieve their intellectual, academic, social and emotional potential.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Clayton Charter School is dedicated to the High/Scope curriculum, based on the premise that learners "construct" understanding of their world through actively engaging with materials to take in new information, internalize it, reshape it and to transform it in relation to understanding already present. The school works to nurture a strong bond between school and home through parent involvement and family social services.

GOVERNANCE: The Clayton Foundation Board of Trustees and the School's Governing Committee (comprised of three parents, three community members and three teachers) set policy for the school. The Clayton Charter School's Director and the School Governing Committee make day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- 85% of students will demonstrate age-appropriate development in the areas of language arts, mathematics, science and social studies by the end of the year.
- 90% of students will enter first grade with the prerequisite learning skills to be successful in the early elementary grades.
- 85% of students leaving the Clayton Charter School at the end of third grade will be able to perform at average or above average achievement levels in a public school.
- 85% of students will demonstrate critical thinking, problem-solving and divergent thinking on appropriate measures throughout the school year.
- 75% of students will be able to exercise self-discipline, identify personal goals, pursue and complete educational tasks and projects and demonstrate pride in work.
- 85% of students will work independently and in groups with other students/adults.
- 75% of student will engage in positive conflict resolution, make good personal decisions and be able to demonstrate appropriate responses to peer pressure.
- The student attendance rate will be at least 95%.
- 75% of the K-1 students participating in the individualized reading instruction program for at-risk readers will read at grade-level. (For 1995-96 school year)

MEASURE	1994-95	1995-96
McCarthy Scales (% of students exhibiting age appropriate development)	pre-K - 100% K - 90% 1st grade - 90% 2nd grade - 89%	pre-K - 100% K - 100% 1st grade - 100% 2nd grade - 76%*
High/Scope Child Observation Record (mean scores for class)	**pre-K** - 3.0 (acceptable range is 2.5 to 3.5) **K** - 4.18 (acceptable range is 3.5 to 4.0)	**pre-K** - 3.74 (acceptable range is 2.5 to 3.5)
Brigance CTBS/V (% of students exhibiting skills that are at or above grade level)		K - 82% 1st grade - 65% 2nd grade - 33%* 3rd grade - 82%
Work Sampling System *(Number of students scoring: Excellent - developing as expected in 19 areas Above Average - developing as expected in 17-18 areas Average - developing as expected in 14-16 areas Below Average - developing as expected in less than 14 areas.)*	***1st grade 2nd grade*** Excellent 10 18 Above Avg. 4 2 Average 5 0 Below Avg. 2 0	***K 1st grade*** Excellent 13 18 Above Avg. 4 0 Average 1 3 Below Avg. 3 0 ***2nd grade 3rd grade*** Excellent 10 14 Above Avg. 0 2 Average 6 0 Below Avg. 1 1
Aggregate of all achievement tests (% of student at grade level)		Preschool - 100% Kindergarten - 88% 1st grade - 75% 2nd grade - 70% 3rd grade - 97% OVERALL - 86%
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)** (Grade level equivalent)		***Reading: Comprehension/ Total*** 2nd grade - 1.6 / 1.4 3rd grade - 2.1 / 2.1
Woodcock Johnson Reading Mastery (administered to K and 1st grade students participating in individualized reading instruction program for at-risk readers.)	program not offered	Students who participated in the program showed a sixth month average gain in reading skills.
Attendance Rate	93.5%	94%
Parent Participation (% of parents who participate in programs)	75%	42 of 84 families participated in at least 50% of programs

* includes six special education students

** Clayton does not consider the ITBS to be a valid assessment of the school's educational program.

ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Douglas County School District

LOCATION: Castle Rock (suburban)
GRADE LEVELS: K-8
STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO: 15:1

ENROLLMENT: 315
WAITING LIST: 675
OPENING DATE: Fall 1993

STUDENT PROFILE:

White:	93.54%	**Free lunch eligibility:**	6.7%
Asian:	1.86%	**Special education:**	13.3%
Black:	.93%		
Hispanic:	3.15%		
Native Am:	.54%		

MISSION: Academy Charter School provides a challenging academic program based on the Core Knowledge Curriculum that promotes Academic Excellence, Character Development and Educational Enthusiasm for its students.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Academy Charter School uses an intensive, hands-on developmental approach to teach the Core Knowledge curriculum. Teachers strive to integrate curriculum/instruction across disciplines while developing students' problem solving and critical thinking skills. Technology and organizational skills are integrated into the curriculum. Each student has an individual learning plan.

GOVERNANCE: A governing board (comprised of seven parents) sets policy for the school. The Dean of the school is responsible for day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Each student will show a minimum of one year's growth in all academic areas (or as reasonable for students with exceptional needs.)
- Meet or exceed the 65 percentile on composite scores for grades 2-8.
- The number of students performing at least one year below grade level will be reduced by 7%.
- Attendance rate will attain or exceed 95%.
- 75% of parents will complete their 20 hour volunteer contract.

MEASURE	1994-95	1995-96
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) (national percentile rank) Reported for both spring/fall of 1994-95 school year and spring of 1995-96 school year. *Note: Spring 1994 results are for new students in the school only. Fall 1995 results are for all students.*	***Reading Language*** 3rd grade: 56/60 64/68 4th 67/67 44/62 5th 57/64 39/55 6th 57/73 44/64 7th 83/79 75/74 ***Math Core*** 3rd grade: 60/68 58/64 4th 49/66 54/64 5th 50/66 46/61 6th 44/70 47/70 7th 47/70 81/77	***Composite Score*** 2nd - 8th grade: 73
Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) (% scoring at proficient level)	***Grade 4 Grade 7*** ***Reading*** Story 82 53 Info 53 53 ***Math*** High 59 67 Medium 24 33 Low 18 0	***Grade 4 Grade 7*** ***Reading*** Story 73 89 Info 38 69
Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) (median percentile rank) **Note that the 6th grade CTBS results were very different from ITBS scores. Academy is exploring the causes of the differences.*	***Grade 3 Grade 6*** ***Reading*** 69 34* ***Language*** 75 46* ***Math*** 86 45* ***Composite*** 75 40*	***Grade 3 Grade 6*** ***Reading*** 72 67 ***Language*** 74 66 ***Math*** 84 81 ***Composite*** 80 73
Parent Involvement	8,127 volunteer hours 61% of parents volunteer at least 20 hours	11,400 volunteer hours 57% of parents volunteer at least 20 hours
Parent Satisfaction (% of parents who agree that school meets students' needs)		95%
Attendance Rate	97%	96%

CORE KNOWLEDGE CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Douglas County School District

LOCATION: Parker (suburban)
GRADE LEVELS: K-7
STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO: K-3 - 18:1
4-6 - 20:1

ENROLLMENT: 210
WAITING LIST: 574
OPENING DATE: Fall 1995

STUDENT PROFILE:
White: 95%
Asian: 2.8%
Hispanic: 2.3%

Free lunch eligibility: school does not offer this federal program
Special education: 1.9%

MISSION: We will strive to build a foundation of knowledge and skills that will enable our children to meet the challenges of a global society.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: The Core Knowledge Charter School features a content-driven curriculum based on the Core Knowledge Foundation's materials. Spanish language instruction is provided at every grade. The school emphasizes high standards for academic performance, small class size and parental involvement.

GOVERNANCE: The Operating Council, comprised of six parents, two staff and the Director, sets policy for the school. The Director is responsible for day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Students will perform at 75 percentile or higher in all content areas as measured by CTBS.
- The school will maintain or exceed a 95% attendance rate.
- 90% of the students will work at or above grade level.
- 90% of parents will meet their obligation of 20+ hours of volunteer time.
- Reading assessment results for fourth graders will be maintained at or above 80% level for comprehension.
- Parents will re-enroll their children at a rate of 90%.
- For the 1995-96 school year, CTBS composite scores for students in grades 5 and 6 will increase by 5% over 1994-95 scores.

MEASURE	1994-95	1995-96
Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) (percentile rank)	*Grade 3* / *Grade 6* **Reading** 76 / 59 **Language** 93 / 78 **Math** 90 / 79 **Composite** 90 / 72 **Spelling** 65 / 73 **Word Anal.** 66 / n/a **Study Skills** n/a / 58	*Grade 3* / *Grade 6* **Reading** 80 / not **Language** 93 / reported **Math** 95 **Composite** 94 **Spelling** 73 **Word Anal.** 75 **Study Skills** n/a
Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) (% of students working at satisfactory level; composite score)	4th grade: 95% (school did not have a 7th grade in this school year)	4th grade: 95% 7th grade: 70%
Parental Involvement (Number of parent hours volunteered)	10,000	10,700
Re-Enrollment Rate (for students who completed the school year)	91%	
Parent Satisfaction (% that stated they are satisfied with school's academic standards)		93%
Attendance Rate	95%	96%

COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Durango School District 9-R

LOCATION: Durango (rural)
GRADE LEVELS: 6-9
STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO: 12:1

ENROLLMENT: 67
WAITING LIST: not reported
OPENING DATE: Fall 1994

STUDENT PROFILE:

White:	80%
Asian:	5%
Black:	1.5%
Hispanic:	10%
Native Am:	3.3%

Free lunch eligibility: 16.7%
Special education: 24%

MISSION: The Mission of the Community of Learners is to provide a positive, mutually respectful environment in which students, parents and teachers share a commitment to an experience of optimal, individualized learning that leads to a lifelong love of learning, as well as a high level of personal achievement.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Community of Learners features student-centered and self-directed learning, individual learning plans and learning in the community. Students participate in service learning and internships. The school combines a commitment to high standards for basic skills with a desire to rethink the total school experience, including the traditional roles of stakeholders, the nature of curriculum and school governance.

GOVERNANCE: The Governing Board, comprised of five parents and two community members, makes policy decisions for the school. The Administrator/Lead Teacher and Team Teachers make daily operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Develop in students and parents a life-long interest in self-directed learning.
- Develop student understanding of how to learn and do effective research.
- Require direct and continuing student involvement in learning system.
- Develop school-wide sensitivity toward others and a sense of responsibility toward community.
- Ensure that students complete the curriculum to be successful in high school and beyond.
- Student portfolios will meet a graduation checklist that includes the state model content standards and the Durango School District 9-R Exit Outcomes.

MEASURE	1994-95	1995-96
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS - Form K and L)* (grade level equivalent, composite)	test only administered to small sample, results not valid	*Composite Score* 6th grade: 7.3 7th: 7.8 8th: 9.6 9th: 9.7
Stanford Writing Assessment (national percentile rank)		*Holistic Score* 8th grade: 63
District Math Standards Assessment (% of students who are proficient in standards for five domains: measurement, number sense, geometry, algebra and statistics) In 1995-96, the assessment was given to students in **grades 6-8**.	Sample too small	**19%** proficient level or higher in **all 5** standards **15%** proficient level or higher in **4 of 5** standards. **15%** proficient level or higher in **3 of 5** standards. **12%** proficient level or higher in **2 of 5** standards **12%** proficient level or higher in **1 of 5** standards. **27%** proficient level or higher in **0 of 5** standards.
Progress of Students on Individual Learning Programs		90% of COL students have successfully completed and transcripted the learning experiences in which they enrolled
Graduation Portfolios		All 8th graders made portfolio presentations to panels comprised of parents, advisors, community members, COL Board member and peers that addressed COL exist outcomes. All but one student was accepted. The one will continue to work on requirements and present in fall of 1996.
Parent Involvement (Number of volunteer hours)	not tracked	2,953
Attendance	92%	

*Community of Learners does not believe that the ITBS is an acceptable way to measure achievement in the COL culture.

EXCEL ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Durango School District 9-R

LOCATION: Durango (rural)
GRADE LEVELS: 6-11
STUDENT: TEACHER RATIO: 20:1

ENROLLMENT: 160
WAITING LIST: none
OPENING DATE: Fall 1994

STUDENT PROFILE: **White:** 88.7%
Black: 2.5%
Hispanic: 5%
Native Am: 2.5%

Free lunch eligibility: school does not offer this federal program
Special education: 4.2%

MISSION: The EXCEL School, a school of choice, is a dynamic educational environment whose participants are willing to take risks as they foster educational excellence and cultivate personal, intellectual and emotional growth, responsibility and citizenship. The school will be a safe, nurturing environment which values the individual, recognizes diversity of learning styles and teaching methods and encourages innovation in teaching while maintaining high academic standards. In cooperation with Fort Lewis College, EXCEL will serve as a professional development center for the region.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: The EXCEL School's curriculum emphasizes basic skill, critical thinking and problem solving, technology and community service. Every student has an individual learning plan, which serves as a three-way contract between the parent, teacher and the student.

GOVERNANCE: The School's Governing Board, comprised of 5 community members and 3 parents, makes policy decisions. The Principal is responsible for day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Students will master the Durango School District standards.
- Students will make progress toward agreed upon contracts to excel.
- Students will achieve at or above grade level.
- The school will attain an attendance rate of 100%.
- Parents will participate in the school at a rate of 95%.

MEASURE	1994-95	1997-98
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) (Average grade level equivalent, composite)	6th grade - 7.6 7th grade - 10.6 8th grade - 11.5 9th grade - 11.9	7th grade - 9.75 8th grade - 10.7 75% of the student body demonstrated improvement on ITBS test scores
District Math Standards Assessment (% of students who are proficient in standards for five domains: measurement, number sense, geometry, algebra and statistics) In 1995-96, the test was given to students in **grades 6-8.**	*not administered*	42% proficient level or higher in **all** 5 standards 98% proficient level or higher in **4 of 5** standards 4% proficient level or higher in **3 of 5** standards 7% proficient level or higher in **2 of 5** standards 7% proficient level or higher in **1 of 5** standards 1% proficient level or higher in **0 of 5** standards
CAP Assessment of Writing - (ACT) (Average score on 6-point scale 4 is acceptable, 5 is commendable)	8th Grade: Holistic Score - 4.47 Content Score - 4.5 Organization - 4.3 Sentence Structure/ Usage - 4.7 Mechanics - 4.3	
Stanford Writing Assessment (national percentile rank)		Holistic Score 6th grade 72
Students meeting local board of education standards	6th grade 100% 7th 95% 8th 100% 9th 92% *All school* 98%	
Attendance Rate	93%	93%
Parent Involvement (Number of volunteer hours)	1,200	3,200
Student Participation in Contracts to Excel		100%

EAGLE COUNTY CHARTER ACADEMY SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Eagle County School District

LOCATION:	Avon (rural/recreational)	ENROLLMENT:	128
GRADE LEVELS:	5-8	WAITING LIST:	not reported
STUDENT: TEACHER RATIO:	16:1	OPENING DATE:	Fall 1994

STUDENT PROFILE:	White: 84.4%	Free lunch eligibility:	program not offered
	Hispanic: 15.6%	Special education:	8.6%

MISSION: In recognition of human diversity of learning styles, the Eagle County Charter Academy will provide a dynamic educational environment of choice for all learners. Our educators will focus on the individual to help students achieve a high standard of academic performance by employing innovative and flexible teaching methods and cultivating personal growth and flexibility.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: The school stresses strong core academics, parental involvement, block scheduling, small class size, personalized learning plans and mentors.

GOVERNANCE: The school has a seven member board (five parents and two staff) that makes policy decisions. School staff are responsible for day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- 100% of students will achieve at least a 75% grade point average.
- 75% of students will score above 50 percentile on standardized tests.
- 95% of students will demonstrate at least 9 months academic growth each year.
- Students will achieve an average score of 3 on district writing and math assessments.
- School attendance will exceed 95%.
- The annual school climate survey will reflect 95% positive responses.
- 75% of all students will read at or above grade level.
- 100% parent attendance for fall conferences.
- 100% of students (who remain in the district) will return to the school for the following year.

MEASURE	1994-95	1995-96
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) core test series (national percentile rank)	3rd Grade - 79 4th 77 5th 65	Fall 95 Spring 96 4th grade 68 5th 77 61 6th 73 74 7th 61 63
District Content/Performance Standards (% of students who perform at district-designated level - - 80% – on the standards)	85% in Language Arts 80% in Math 81% in Social Studies	Language Arts Math 4th grade 100 % 91% 5th 94% 84% 6th 94% 91% 7th 97% 94% Social Studies Science 4th grade 91 % 94% 5th 79% 91% 6th 91% 100% 7th 91% 97%
District Writing Assessment (Average Score on 5-point test; 5 is highest score)	3.24 (Sept. 1994 baseline)	3.27 (Sept. 1995) 3.74 (April 1996) 95% of all students receive a score of 3 or above
Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (complete battery) (% of students who perform at, above or below grade level)	at or above below School-wide 66% 34% (Results for Fall 1995)	at or above below 4th - 62%/79% 38%/21% 5th - 66%/79% 34%/21% 6th - 69%/87% 31%/13% 7th - 59%/79% 41%/25% (Results for both Fall 1995/Spring 1996)
Grade Point Average (students maintaining 75% (2.0)	90%	85.09%
Attendance	95.2%	94.89%
Parent Satisfaction (% who gave an overall positive rating)	85%	85%
Parent attendance at fall conferences	100%	100%
Parent involvement (Number of volunteer hours)	3,000	3,000
Re-enrollment rate		89%

COMMUNITY INVOLVED CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Jefferson County School District RE-1

LOCATION: Lakewood (suburban)
GRADE LEVELS: pre-K-12
STUDENT:TEACHER RATIO: 16.7:1
ENROLLMENT: 575
WAITING LIST: 70+
OPENING DATE: Fall 1994

STUDENT PROFILE:
White: 82.1%
Asian: 3%
Black: 3%
Hispanic: 10.8%
Native Am: 1%
Free lunch eligibility: 20.8%
Special education: 12%

MISSION: To provide a personalized education in a nurturing and challenging environment and to develop the whole person through choice, self-direction, experiential learning, shared responsibility and lifelong learning.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Upon entering CICS, all students are assigned a staff advisor with whom they, along with their parents, develop personal learning plans. The plan includes an assessment of the student's present status with respect to the school's learning expectations -- 48 statements of what students must demonstrate in order to progress, and ultimately, graduate. Learning expectations must be demonstrated at three levels in developmentally appropriate ways. The CICS curriculum gives equal weight to intellectual and character development. Character education is addressed by 30 character learning expectations and by a service learning requirement. CICS's primary instructional method is experiential. Students exercise many choices as they decide which activities, materials and resources they use, under the auspices of their advisors. In the future, the school hopes to offer diverse activities and learning experiences for all members of the learning community and to coordinate various social and support services to families at the school site.

GOVERNANCE: The Governing Board, comprised of three staff members, two students, two parents, and two community members, makes policy decisions for the school. The Coordinator and team leaders make day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Students will master basic skills in literacy and numeracy, including artistic literacy.
- The school's curriculum for all levels will comply with the state content standards.
- Each student will develop the inner qualities essential to joyous and effective learning and living, to include: self-esteem, self-confidence, self-initiative, self-reliance, self-discipline, self-knowledge, self-evaluation and self-respect.
- Each student will acquire the knowledge, attitudes and practices which promote social, emotional, physical, spiritual growth and mental health, as well as intellectual and creative development.
- Improve attendance rate (by 2% for 1996-97 school year).
- Improve retention rate (by 3% for 1996-97) and double the number of graduated students (to 20 for 1996-97 school year).

MEASURE	1994-95	1995-96
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS short form)** National percentile rank		***Grade*** ***3 5 7*** ***Reading*** Advanced Skills 25 39 26 Total 18 34 31 ***Language*** Advanced Skills 12 31 13 Total 10 23 13 ***Math*** Advanced Skills 33 39 35 Total 23 23 26 **Battery Total** 15 24 22
Iowa Test of Educational Development (Form K) Typical student at CICS scores same or higher than X % of 10th grade students in the nation.		Reading Adv. Skills - 51 Reading Total 52 Expression Adv. 31 Correctness/Approp. Of Expression 30 Quantitative Thinking Advanced Skills 44 Ability To Do Quantitative Thinking 45 **Total** 41
Passages Proposed and Completed (for students in Seasons 3/4/5 - roughly age 13-18)		80 passages proposed and 45 passages completed.
Attendance Rate	92%	86.5%

** The school does not consider the ITBS to be a valid measure of what students know and are able to do. Standardized tests, such as the ITBS, do not deal with 75% of the school's curriculum: social, creative and personal skills. CICS presently documents learning by student/teacher evaluations in Seasons One and Two (ages 5-12) and by student self-evaluation/anecdotal teacher response in Seasons Three through Five (ages 13 through 18).

JEFFERSON ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Jefferson County School District R-1

LOCATION: Broomfield (suburban)
GRADE LEVELS: K-6
STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO: 18.9:1

ENROLLMENT: 227
WAITING LIST: 800
SCHOOL OPENING: Fall 1994

STUDENT PROFILE:

White:	93.8%	**Free lunch eligibility:**	1.3%
Asian:	1.3%	**Special education:**	4.4%
Black:	1.0%		
Hispanic:	3.5%		
Native Am:	.4%		

MISSION: The mission of Jefferson Academy is to help students attain their highest social and academic potential through an academically rigorous, content rich educational program.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Jefferson Academy uses the Core Knowledge Foundation's Scope and Sequence and a fundamental, "back-to-basics" approach. The school emphasizes the teaching of basic skills with a traditional and conventional approach in a self-contained educational environment. The entire class generally works as a single group on grade level material with ability grouping occurring as necessary. Strict discipline and order is maintained.

GOVERNANCE: A Board of Directors (comprised of six parents and the Principal) is responsible for establishing school policy and for all aspects of the school. The Principal, in consultation with staff, makes daily operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Reading and language scores will improve a minimum of five national percentile points.
- The school will maintain an attendance rate of 95% or better.
- 50% of students performing one year below grade level and continuously enrolled will be performing at grade level by July 1, 1996.
- 75% of students performing at least one year above grade level will show 9-months academic growth.
- 75% or more of students in grade three to six will be able to create and produce a product using visual, audio or print means that relates to or supports their curriculum, through the use of computer technology.
- 90% of parents will re-enroll their children in the school.

MEASURE	1994-95	1995-96
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS - Form G) (national percentile rank) *Note: The 1st grade took the level 5 test in Fall 1994 and the level 7 test in Spring 1995,1996. The 2nd grade took the level 7 test in Fall 1994 and the level 8 test in Spring 1995,1996. The 3rd grade took the level 8 test in Fall 1994 and level 9 in Spring 1995,1996. The 4th grade took the G series in Fall 1995 and the G & H series in Spring 1995, 1996.*	***Vocabulary Reading*** 1st grade: 33/77 34/59 2nd 31/67 25/59 3rd 38/60 51/63 4th 51/70 35/59 5th 58/59 43/53 6th 74/71 72/77 ***Lang. Spelling Math*** 1st grade: 58/53 78/84 2nd 53/54 37/76 3rd 42/77 35/76 4th 41/70 47/63 5th 53/64 53/59 6th 56/68 61/77 ***Results are shown for both Fall 1994/Spring 1995***	***Vocabulary Reading*** 1st grade: 84 82 2nd 70 66 3rd 71 64 4th 71 71 5th 73 70 6th 70 70 ***Lang. Spelling Math*** 1st grade: 64 91 2nd 80 71 3rd 83 77 4th 79 83 5th 74 78 6th 71 70 ***Results are shown for Spring 1996.***
ITBS - Form G (% of students at or above grade level)	58.8% (Fall 1994)	85.7% (Spring 1996)
Parent Involvement (Volunteer Hours)	6,000 hours (24.69 average)	7,325 hours (26.64 average)
Parent Satisfaction (% of parents who agree that the school meets their children's needs)	97%	98%
Re-enrollment Rate	97.5%	98%
Attendance Rate	96.4%	96.4%

SCI-TECH ACADEMY

Sponsoring District: Jefferson County School District Re-1

LOCATION:	Littleton (suburban)	**ENROLLMENT:**	99
GRADE LEVELS:	7-12	**WAITING LIST:**	150
STUDENT: TEACHER RATIO:	19.8:1	**OPENING DATE:**	Fall 1994

STUDENT PROFILE:	**White:**	92%	**Free lunch eligibility:**	7.1%
	Asian:	1%	**Special education:**	12.1%
	Black:	3%		
	Hispanic:	3%		

MISSION: Sci-Tech Academy, a prototype 21st century school, uses state-of-the-art technology to provide a sound educational environment grounded in the fundamental skills of a traditional college preparatory curriculum. The environment will be individually structured to optimize each student's growth, so that all students, including "at-risk" pupils and those who are challenging with learning difficulties, will acquire a first-class education.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Sci-Tech's curriculum philosophy emphasizes science and math, cultural literacy, communication skills, technology articulation and a balanced liberal arts approach. The curriculum is highly interdisciplinary, connecting facts, skills and processes as they are connected in the real world. Scheduling is flexible; emphasis is on achievement, not time spent. The school day is extended, from 7 to 5. Students have some control over how they meet the school's academic requirements.

GOVERNANCE: Sci-Tech's Executive Committee, comprised of two parents, two staff people, one community member, and two students (who are non-voting members), set policy for the school. The school's Director is responsible for day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- All students will complete Sci-Tech's requirements at the "Mastery" level (grade A or B) and 20% of all achievement must earn a "Distinguished" rating (grade A+). These requirements will incorporate state and local requirements for graduation.
- Each student will be encouraged to attempt one Advanced Placement exam.
- The school will work to reduce the number of "in progress" reports and increase the number of students completed course work on schedule.
- The school will work to increase the number of students doing individual study, large projects and integrated learning and reduce the number of traditional class periods.

MEASURE	1994-95	1995-96
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) (grade level equivalent)	*Fall 94* *Spring 95* 9th grade 9.87 11.9 10th 8.78 10.93 11th 11.9 13.9 *86% of the students showed improvement*	
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)		***Middle School:*** Reading: on par with district norms Math: 8% above district norms ***High School*** Reading: 9% above district norms Math: 1% above district norms
Attendance	91%	

BATTLE ROCK CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Montezuma-Cortez School District RE-1

LOCATION: Cortez (rural)
GRADE LEVELS: K-6
STUDENT:TEACHER RATIO: 24:1
ENROLLMENT: 24
WAITING LIST: 8
OPENING DATE: Fall 1994

STUDENT PROFILE: **White:** 87.5%
Asian: 12.5%
Free lunch eligibility: program not offered
Special education: 6%

MISSION: The mission of Battle Rock School is to enrich the students through both outdoor and indoor educational studies. Education at Battle Rock will promote the sharing of responsibilities, nurturing of family values, interacting with multi-age groups, and participation in innovative hands-on lessons to prepare the student to be a decent, self-motivated contributing citizen.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Battle Rock School offers personalized learning experiences for every child. Core academic skills are taught through thematic projects. Instruction features outdoor learning, the community as classroom, multi-age groupings and acceleration based on ability. The school works closely with parents to support instruction and reinforce values.

GOVERNANCE: The Governing Board, comprised of five parents and two community members, makes policy decisions for the school. The Director makes day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- All students will obtain at least a 75% mastery level in Reading, Language and Math.
- 90% of students will perform at or above grade level as measured by the standard testing instruments of the district.
- The school will attain an attendance rate of at least 95%.

MEASURE	1994-95	1995-96
Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS)-Form K complete battery (% of students performing at or above grade level)	not administered	Language - 71.42% Reading - 80.95% Math - 92.86%
District developed "Levels Test"	not administered	*Lang/Reading* *Math* 3rd grade 83.3% 89.9% 5th 100 % 97.5% 6th 81.3% 66.7%
Curriculum-Based Post Test Instruments (% of students who obtain 75% mastery of material)	Language - 84.69% Reading - 95.23% Math - 92.03%	Language - 70.61% Reading - 95.24% Math - 84.17%
Attendance Rate	92.5%	95%

PUEBLO SCHOOL FOR ARTS AND SCIENCES

Sponsoring District: Pueblo School District 60

LOCATION:	Pueblo (urban)	ENROLLMENT:	357
GRADE LEVELS:	K - 10	WAITING LIST:	400
STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO:	14.9:1	OPENING DATE:	Fall 1994

STUDENT PROFILE:	White: 46.5%	Free lunch eligibility:	29.4%
	Black: 2.8%	Special education:	9.1%
	Hispanic: 50.1%		
	Native Am: .6%		

MISSION: Pueblo School for Arts and Sciences (PSAS) believes that "the best education for the best is the best education for us all." PSAS will promote enlightened educational goals while utilizing effective and innovative teaching techniques. Students will develop to their fullest potential and the community will share a commitment to learning as a life long process.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: PSAS features the same core curriculum for all students and enriched educational setting in which all students will succeed. The arts are infused throughout the curriculum and are an integrated part of students' education within the structure of a sound academic program. Instruction is based on the Paideia model including didactic, tutoring and coaching and seminars.

GOVERNANCE: The Site Council (comprised of three parents, three students, three faculty members, a USC/District 60 Alliance representative, a Pueblo District 60 representative, a Sangre de Cristo Arts & Conference Center representative, business representatives from the Latino Chamber of Commerce and the Pueblo Chamber of Commerce and the USC Provost) make policy decisions. The Dean of the School makes day-to-day operational decisions, in consultation with the faculty.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- Students will meet or exceed all exit outcomes as determined by District 60 and the state of Colorado.
- The school's integrated arts curriculum, instruction and assessment tools will be aligned with state standards.
- By July 1997, the percentage of students working below grade level will decrease to 10%, students at grade level will increase to 60% and students above grade level will increase to 30%. Ethnic and gender discrepancies will improve by 10%.
- 90% of students in grades 4, 8 and 10 will demonstrate attainment of content standards at proficient level before they move to the next grade.
- By July 1997, 100% of at-risk students will have the necessary academic skills to go to the next level of instruction.
- 90% of all students will re-enroll in the school.
- The school's attendance rate will increase to 98%.
- 99% of parents will agree that PSAS meets students' needs.
- 95% of PSAS families will volunteer at least 16 hours/year.

MEASURE	1994-95		1995-96
Science Research Achievement Test (composite score)		Reading / Language	This test is no longer used by District 60
	3rd grade	50 / 51	
	5th	54 / 48	
	6th	56 / 49	
		Math / Composite	
	3rd grade	51 / 51	
	5th	48 / 50	
	6th	51 / 53	
Attendance	95.15%		93.3%
Parent involvement (% who contributed at least 15 hours)	60%		65%

THE CONNECT CHARTER SCHOOL

Sponsoring District: Pueblo School District 70

LOCATION: Pueblo (rural)
GRADE LEVELS: 6-8
STUDENT:TEACHER RATIO: 22.2:1

ENROLLMENT: 111
WAITING LIST: 100+
OPENING DATE: Fall 1993

STUDENT PROFILE: White: 74.8%
Asian: 1.8%
Hispanic: 22.5%
Native Am: 0%

Free lunch eligibility: school does not offer this federal program
Special education: less than 5%

MISSION: The purpose of this school is to offer the finest academic program possible that will provide for increased learning opportunities for all student in an environment devised to meet the unique needs of each student by providing opportunities consistent with the learning styles; to improve pupil learning by creating a school with high and rigorous standards for pupil performance; to encourage and allow the most effective and innovative teaching methods in an environment where each student is truly known; to provide teachers with the opportunity, responsibility and accountability for the management and control of the total school curriculum and environment; to produce a flexible set of learning outcomes measured with different and authentic forms of assessments; to provide students and parents with an educational opportunity to the highest quality; and to foster student, parent, and community involvement through the use of community resources and partnerships.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM: Connect emphasizes reduced class size, increased time spent on core subjects, connecting the community as classroom, and focusing resources on instruction. Connect uses a proven curriculum and adds a hands-on instructional approach and unique "city school" resources.

GOVERNANCE: The Governing Board, comprised of three parents, one student, one administrator and one community member, makes policy decisions in consultation with staff. The Administrator and staff make day-to-day operational decisions.

PERFORMANCE GOALS (From charter and annual school improvement plans):

- 90% of students will perform at or above grade level in all content areas using district's standardized testing program.
- 85% of continuously enrolled students will achieve at 85% or above in mathematics, reading and language.
- 100% of students performing below grade level will show at least 9 months academic growth.
- 100% of students will receive a grade of C or better in exhibitions and in the Rite of Passage Exam on the first attempt.
- 100% of students will use technology to increase personal productivity, will be able to use various multimedia programs to assemble and present information, and will be able to use telecommunications to access information.

MEASURE	1994-95	1995-96
Stanford Achievement Test: District's testing program (% of students who met district's standard of success (4-9 examinee))	Math - 82.8% Reading - 83.9% Language Arts - 77.8%	Math - 87.28% Reading - 84.83% Language Arts - 84.11%
Student Exhibitions involves the student presenting and defending his or her work before an audience (% of students who achieved a "C" or better in exhibitions)	90%	98%
Exit Exams (% of students who achieved a grade of "C" or better on their first attempt)		90%
Parent Attendance at School Functions	90%	
Re-enrollment Rate		95%
Attendance Rate	92%	91%

PART V - CHARTER SCHOOL REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES

Policy Context

The Colorado Charter Schools Act provides that the charter school and the sponsoring district "shall agree to funding and on any services to be provided by the school district to the charter school." The Act requires that the fu nding negotiated "cannot be less than eighty percent of the district per pupil operating revenues (PPOR) multiplied by the number of pupils enrolled in the charter school." PPOR is the funding for a district that represents the financial base of support for public education in that district, divided by the district's funded pupil count, minus funds transferred to the capital reserve fund, the insurance reserve fund or any other fund for the management of risk-related activities.

All services provided by the school district, such as food services, custodial services, maintenance, transportation, media services, libraries and extracurricular are subject to negotiation between the charter school and the school district and are to be paid for out of the revenues negotiated or raised independently by the charter school. Charter schools also are entitled to the proportionate share of state and federal resources generated by students with disabilities and the staff serving them.

The charter schools in the first year study negotiated funding rates from 80% to 100% with their sponsoring districts. Nine (60%) of the schools in the first year study receive funding at a level that is between 80% and 95% of their sponsoring district's PPOR. Table 8 provides an overview of these funding rates.

Table 8 - % of District PPOR Funded by the Sponsoring District

% of District PPOR Funded	Number	Charter School (Sponsoring District)
80% - 84%	9 (60%)	Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12) - 82% Clayton Charter (DPS) - 80% Jefferson Academy (Jefferson County) - 80% Battle Rock (Montezuma-Cortez) - 80% Public School Initiatives (Pueblo 60) - 80% Community of Learners (Durango 9-R) - 81% Excel (Durango 9-R) - 81% Community Involved (Jefferson County) - 80% Six Trick (Jefferson County) - 80%
85% - 89%	1 (7%)	Connect (Pueblo 70) - 87%
91% - 95%	2 (7%)	Eagle County Academy (Eagle County) - 93% Stargate (Adams 12) - 95%
96% - 100%	3 (14%)	Academy Charter School (Douglas County) - 100% Core Knowledge (Douglas County) - 100%

The Colorado Charter Schools Act did not appropriate state funds to help charter schools cover their start-up costs. Moreover, the majority of charter (CTC) schools in the first year study are renting their facilities because they could not secure appropriate district facilities for use. Table 8 describes the type of facilities secured by the charter schools as well as rental and renovation costs incurred by them. Only four of the fourteen schools in the charter study use district facilities for which no rent is paid. Two others use non-district facilities, but do not have to pay rent. The other eight schools pay rent out of their operating revenues.

Table 8 - Facility Costs Incurred by Charter Schools

Charter School (Surrounding District)	Facility Owner	Annual Rent	Sq. ft./student	Renovation Costs
Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12 Five Star)	District	$144,721	160	$33,204
Stargate (Adams 12 Five Star)	City	not reported	69.7	not reported
Clayton (Denver Public Schools)	Clayton Foundation	none	136	$200,000
Academy Charter (Douglas County)	Private	$160,764	64.4	$165,000
Core Knowledge (Douglas County)	Private	$92,040	58.4	1994-95: $40,000 1999-00: $9,672
Eagle County Charter (Eagle County)	Church	$35,835	54	$65,000
Community of Learners (Durango 9-R)	District	none	160	none
Excel Charter (Durango 9-R)	District	none	228	not provided
Gotta Have (Montezuma-Cortez)	City	none	45	none
Community Involved (Jefferson County)	Private	$180,000	67	$100,000
Jefferson Academy (Jefferson County)	District	none	113	1994-95: $8,000 1999-00: $5,000
Ken Caryl (Jefferson County)	Private	$90,000	67	1994-95:$100,000 1999-00: $5,000
Pueblo School for Arts and Sciences (Pueblo District 60)	District	none	117	$100,000
Summit Charter (Pueblo District 70)	Private	$36,000	20	none

Data Source: Colorado Charter Schools

Analysis of Charter School Revenues and Expenditures

Methodology

The evaluation team used budgeted revenues and expenditures because actual expenditures were not available from the schools. The team decided to review only 1995-96 budgets in order to eliminate start-up costs expended during the school's first year of operations.

Revenue

With one exception, the charter schools rely on public funds for the great majority of their revenue. The Clayton Charter School (DPS) received support from the Clayton Foundation that represented 57.9% of their total revenue. The Clayton Foundation support included funds for an after-school program called the "Clayton Thinkers" and administrative support for the charter school in the form of bookkeeping and personnel services. Eagle County Charter (Eagle County) and Sci-Tech (Jefferson County) receive 14.2% and 9.3% of their budgets, respectively, from fees and fundraising. Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences (Pueblo District 60) received support from the University of Southern Colorado. The other charter schools identified only minimal sources of private revenue, including gifts, donations, fundraising and fees. Table 10 provides a break-down of the charter schools' revenue sources.

Table 10 - Sources of Revenue

Charter School (Sponsoring District)	Total Revenue	% of Total Revenue that comes from public sources		% of Total Revenue that comes from other sources (fees, grants, etc.)
		PPOR	Other Public	
Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12)	$1,805,520	95.5%	0%	5%
Stargate (Adams 12)	$ 687,781	100%	0%	0%
Clayton (Denver Public Schools)	$ 929,352	33.7%	6.5%	59.8%
Academy Charter (Douglas County)	$1,266,040	99.9%	0%	1%
Core Knowledge (Douglas County)	$ 974,395	99.9%	0%	1%
Community of Learners (Durango 9-R)	$ 244,900	98.8%	0%	1.2%
Excel (Durango 9-R)	$ 703,068	100%	0%	0%
Eagle (Eagle County)	$ 678,300	85.8%	0%	14.2%
Community Involved (Jefferson County)	$1,323,213	97.7%	1.6%	7%
Jefferson Academy (Jefferson County)	$ 730,523	94.03%	2.12%	3.85%
Sci-Tech (Jefferson County)	$ 493,525	90.7%	0%	9.3%
Battle Rock (Montezuma-Cortez)	$ 82,129	100%	0%	0%
Pueblo School Arts/Sciences (Pueblo 60)	$1,156,746	93.8%	3.1%	3.1%
Connect (Pueblo 70)	$ 419,557	100%	0%	0%

Expenditures

Charter school budgets do not follow – and are not required to follow – a common reporting format, so the evaluation team allocates charter school expenditures to the following cost categories

'Student specific expenditures' covers those items related to instruction, including salaries and benefits for administrators, teachers, aides, substitutes and secretaries and other expenses, such as books, computers, equipment, materials, staff development, guidance counselors, social workers, health services, library services and extracurricular activities

The evaluation team was prepared to apply the same format to comparison schools in order to produce comparative cost studies. This effort was not productive, however because the majority of the sponsoring districts do not keep building level budgeting and accounting data, but only district level data

Table 11 - Charter School Expenditures for "Student Specific" Costs

Charter School (Sponsoring District)	Total Student Specific Expenditures	School Size (Grades)	Salaries/ Benefits	Other Student Specific Exp.
Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12)	$1,467,813	606 (K-12)	$1,061,225	$406,588
Stargate (Adams 12)	$ 568,516	176 (1-6)	$ 468,450	$101,369
Clayton Charter School (DPS)	$ 636,315	106 (preK-5)	$ 483,870	$152,345
Academy Charter School (Douglas County)	$ 990,879	315 (K-8)	$ 809,303	$181,576
Core Knowledge (Douglas County)	$ 549,178	210 (K-7)	$ 496,078	$ 53,100
Community of Learners (Durango 9-R)	$ 229,900	90 (6-8)	$ 216,600	$ 13,300
Eureka Charter School (Durango 9-R)	$ 434,517	156 (K-11)	$ 318,247	$116,270
Eagle Charter Academy (Eagle County)	$ 561,000	138 (K-8)	$ 469,500	$ 91,500
Community Involved Charter (Jefferson)	$ 991,900	370 (preK-12)	$ 826,400	$ 165,500
Jefferson Academy (Jefferson County)	$ 683,991	227 (K-8)	$ 540,346	$ 143,645
Ben Tech (Jefferson County)	$ 371,800	99 (7-12)	$ 330,800	$ 41,000
Sable Rock (Montezuma-Cortez)	$ 63,852	24 (K-8)	$ 52,600	$ 12,152
Pueblo School Arts/Sciences (Pueblo 60)	$1,112,805	357 (K-12)	$ 933,743	$177,062
Connect (Pueblo 70)	$ 984,214	171 (K-8)	$ 252,500	$731,668

Data Source: Colorado Charter Schools

PART VI - IMPACT OF WAIVERS

Policy Context

This section of the report looks at the pattern of waiver requests made by charter schools and the impact of these waivers on the schools' educational program. It further explores whether, in the experience of schools in the first year study, the existing waiver mechanism is adequate to support the intent and purpose of the Colorado Charter Schools Act.

At the time of the study, twenty-five states and the District of Columbia have enacted charter school legislation. In a recent study, the Education Commission of the States identified eight components of 'stronger' charter school laws. These components are described as those that are 'most true to the charter school concept, challenge the status quo aspects of the system and theoretically may lead to broader student impacts and ripple effects.' Among these eight components of 'stronger' charter school laws is automatic exemption of charter schools from most state laws or regulations and from local policies.[1]

The Colorado charter school law does not provide for such an automatic exemption or 'superwaiver' for charter schools. Instead, the law extends to charter schools the operation of the same waiver provision that has been available to every public school district in Colorado since 1969.

This provision, Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-2-117, allows the state board of education to waive the requirements of education laws (Title 22), and the rules and regulations promulgated by the state board of education under those laws, subject to standards providing for educational achievement and enhancement of educational opportunity. The waiver application must be made by the board of education of the requesting school district and reflect the concurrence of: (1) a majority of the appropriate accountability committee; (2) a majority of the affected certified administrators; and (3) a majority of the teachers in the affected school or district.

The Colorado Charter Schools Act requires that the contract between a charter school and a local board of education include all requests for waivers from state law or regulation. These waiver requests to the state board must be jointly made by the local board of education and the governing body of the charter school. (Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-30.5-105). Waivers made in connection with charter school applications are issued for a period equal to the term of the charter, subject to review every two years. Charter schools may seek renewal of the waiver for subsequent terms of their charter under the same terms and conditions described above.

The charter application process normally precedes the opening of the school. Therefore, at the time a charter school applies for waivers, the school has no teachers, administrators or accountability committee members to make the concurrences required in the waiver statute. The state board has granted waivers to charter schools under

[1] Bierlein, Louann. Charter Schools: Initial Findings. Education Commission of the States. 1996.

these conditions, however, concluding that the intent of the statute is met. Charter schools are schools of choice for teachers and administrators as well as students. Educators who choose to work at a particular charter school do so with full knowledge of the waivers in effect at the school.

The stated purpose of the waiver statute is to advance educational achievement and accountability as described in Sections 22-53-203 to 22-53-208, Colo. Rev. Stat. Prior to the advent of charter schools in Colorado, the waiver statute was not used extensively. Charter schools, on the other hand, have used the waiver provision extensively. Every charter school in the first year study sought at least one waiver and most schools pursued multiple waivers. There are several explanations for the expansive use of the waiver law by charter schools. The first explanation is a practical one: as schools of choice, it is easier for charter schools to obtain the concurrences required by the waiver statute.

Another explanation is that the budget constraints facing charter schools force them to do business in a different way. The Colorado Charter Schools Act provides no start-up funds for new charter schools and requires that charter schools receive a minimum of 80% of per pupil operating revenue. Some charter schools have successfully negotiated a higher rate of funding, others have not. Moreover, most schools must pay some portion of their operating revenues to rent facilities because they do not have access to school district facilities or to capital construction funds. Finally, many of the charter schools seek to maintain lower pupil/teacher ratios than conventional public schools. This practice has major fiscal implications. Given these budget parameters, the ability to structure employee compensation outside the district's normal salary schedule is essential to the viability of many charter schools.

A third explanation is philosophical. In order to implement a distinctive educational program, the great majority of charter schools have attempted to establish considerable autonomy from their sponsoring district in matters related to personnel, governance and educational approach (e.g. testing, curriculum, instruction, discipline code, professional development activities). In their waiver petitions, many charter school applicants stated their belief that existing school structures and approaches are not serving students well. They cited system issues that they perceive exist in conventional public schools -- including the alienation of parents, non-responsiveness to consumer needs, highly managed parent and community involvement in decision-making, frustration with collective bargaining and the inflexible Master Agreements produced through this process, and lack of flexibility regarding salary schedules and teacher evaluations -- that they intend to avoid or overcome.

Methodology

The evaluators reviewed the written waiver requests filed by the charter schools and the minutes of state board meetings during which the requests were considered. For each charter school in the first year cohort, the evaluators identified each waiver requested, the rationale given by the charter school for the request, and the alternative approach the school offered to use in lieu of the statute being waived. Through a customized waiver questionnaire sent to each charter school, the evaluators asked the schools to confirm the accuracy of this information. In addition, the questionnaire

asked the school to state whether each waiver was effective in giving charter schools the flexibility to implement its distinctive educational programs, and to describe the impact of the waiver on the school's program.

In an effort to explore more fully the policy implications of the charter schools' waiver practices, the questionnaire sought information with respect to three additional issues. First, the schools were asked to identify the two to three waivers that had been most essential in their efforts to design and operate their educational programs. This question was designed to determine the relative priority and importance of the waivers pursued by the charter schools. Secondly, the questionnaire asks schools to identify instances, if any, where their sponsoring districts precluded or discouraged them from seeking waivers from the state board. Third, the questionnaire asks schools whether changes in the sponsoring district's leadership or philosophy have resulted in changes in the district's interpretation of the scope or the waivers granted to the charter school.

All fourteen of the schools in the first-year cohort completed the questionnaire. It is important to note, however, that because of turnover in the position of school director/principal/manager, the person completing the questionnaire was not, in every case, involved in the development of the charter application of the preparation of the waiver petition to the state board.

Findings

There is a discernible pattern of waiver requests among the charter schools, despite the wide range of philosophies represented by these schools. This pattern is common both with respect to the specific statutes the charter schools sought to waive and to the priority the schools assign to the waivers. Table 12 provides an overview of the frequency and distribution of the waivers requested by the first year cohort of charter schools.

Table 13. Overview of Statutes Waived by Charter Schools

Statute Waived	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
22-9-101 - Certificated Personnel Performance Evaluation Act	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
22-32-109 - Local Board Duties	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
22-32-110(1) - Local Board Powers	X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X	X		
22-32-126 - Employment and Authority of Principals	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		
22-33-104(4) - Compulsory School Attendance	X						X							
22-63-101 - Teacher Employment, Compensation and Dismissal Act	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Miscellaneous Accreditation Rules	X						X				X	X		

6. Certificated Performance Evaluation Act

Description of Statute Waiver. The Act (Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-9-105) establishes the duties and requirements of school districts regarding the evaluation of certificated personnel, the district's reporting requirements to the State Board and the minimum information required in the district's written evaluation system.

How Many Charter Schools Sought the Waiver? All fourteen of the charter schools in the first-year study sought and received a waiver from the operation of this statute.

Why Did the Charter Schools Request the Waiver? The charter schools perceived the operation of this Act to be a barrier to the schools' ability to address the professional growth and evaluation of staff in a manner that is consistent with (and that contributes to) the school's educational program and governance model. The charter schools consistently cited the following reasons alone or in some combination for pursuing a waiver of the Certificated Performance Evaluation Act:

- To implement a more collaborative evaluation system that allows for input from parents, the governing board of the school, students and peers and/or that considers a broader range of issues (class size, work load, etc.) in the evaluation process.
- To tie the evaluation process more directly to compensation in order to implement performance pay.
- To use an evaluation system with a design, purpose and structure that is consistent with the school's instructional model and general educational approach. (For example, a school with an educational approach defined by collaboration among parents, educators and the community, would want an evaluation approach that reflects and seeks to reinforce this collaboration.)
- To have evaluations conducted by someone other than (or in addition to) a 'principal' with a traditional administrative duties.

Was the Waiver Effective? All 14 charter schools in the first year study ranked the waiver of the evaluation act as among the 'priority waivers' that made the most difference to the school's ability to pursue its educational and governance vision.

What Alternative Policies Are in Place to Meet the Intent of the Law That Was Waived? All of the schools in the first year study have an evaluation policy in place. In most cases, the charter school's evaluation policy is a variation of the governing district's evaluation policy, adjusted to be more compatible with the school's educational approach. Several charter schools are also refining their evaluation policies. Table 10 describes the alternative evaluation policies the charter schools are using.

Table 13 Charter School Alternative Evaluation Policies and Procedures

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- [illegible] key schools to develop policies for employment and professional growth that are consistent with the local educational program and governance model.

B. Teacher Employment, Compensation and Dismissal Act

Description of Statute Manual. This law, [illegible] Act, that [illegible] of law, contains numerous provisions that define the nature of the employment relationship between teachers and their employers. The law:

- requires all teachers to hold a teacher's certificate. (Certificate laws may also refer to a system of teacher and administrator licensure. In this area the first year charter school school applied for waivers. The state system of teacher certification was still in effect. Therefore, this evaluation report will point out to you the terminology associated with certification.);
- requires all employment contracts to be in writing and to contain specific damage provisions;
- exempt [illegible] requirements, regarding the transfer of teachers;
- sets specific requirements for probationary teachers and the renewal and nonrenewal of their contracts;
- sets forth the grounds and a detailed administrative procedure for the dismissal of non-probationary teachers;
- requires districts to adopt a salary schedule, salary policy or a uniform salary schedule and policy; and
- requires those districts that adopt a salary schedule to place teachers on the salary schedule at a level at least commensurate with any one [illegible] on the teacher's circulation, prior experience and experience in the district.

How Many Charter Schools Sought this Waiver? Thirteen of the schools in the first year group — all four charters in Apollo School Program Option "C" sought and were granted a waiver of some or all provisions of this law. Many [illegible] schools across the nation do pursue this same waiver.

Why Did the Charter Schools Request this Waiver? The schools requested this waiver for two primary reasons. The first major rationale was to make it possible for the schools to be able to design and implement a compensation plan and a plan of employment conditions that recognized the school's autonomy, such as educational program and that are consistent with the school's educational and governance approach. Some charter schools were hoping that by [illegible] would be able to [illegible] schools. Such arrangements, they would not [illegible] they had to comply with the district salary schedule.

The second major rationale for the waiver request is the desire of the schools to hire teachers without [illegible] certificate. In their waiver petitions, the charter schools argued that they would maintain teaching quality while removing certain [illegible] certification barriers.

Was the Waiver Effective? [illegible] of the charter schools that sought this waiver maintained that the waiver has been [illegible] to achieve the advantage sought by the schools. In planning the request, [illegible] schools to obtain certification also, the

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] [illegible]

[illegible]

Table 31 - [illegible]

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[illegible]

Academy Charter School (Douglas County)	All employees are at-will. The school sets its own salary structure. Teachers are not required to have a certificate.
Core Knowledge (Douglas County) **Eagle** (Eagle County) **Jefferson** (Jefferson County) **Sci-Tech** (Jefferson County) **Ross** (Durango 9-R)	All employees are at-will, regardless of their length of service. Teachers are employed under the terms and conditions of a written employment contract. The school district does not make transfers to or within the charter school unless the staff voluntarily apply to work at the school. The school fixes the compensation of all employees. Teachers are not required to hold a valid certificate upon being employed, but must obtain a certificate by the end of their fourth year of employment.
Community Involved Charter (Jefferson County)	All employees are at-will, employed on a year-to-year basis. The school sets compensation based on criteria listed in the employment contract. The district does not assign teachers or administrators to the school unless the staff voluntarily apply to work at the school.
Battle Rock Charter (Montezuma-Cortez District)	All employees are at-will, on year-to-year contracts. The school sets compensation. Terms of employment are defined in the contract. The school may hire qualified individuals who do not hold a Colorado certificate, but such persons agree to obtain a certificate before their third year of employment with the school.
Pueblo School for the Arts & Sciences (Pueblo School District 60)	The school does not use the district salary schedule. Teacher compensation is determined by the governing board and is based in part, on performance. The school may hire qualified staff, for example, university faculty or people with expertise in foreign languages or the arts, who do not hold a Colorado teacher certificate. Other provisions of the Act remain effective, but references in the statute to "school district" were replaced by references to "the University of Southern Colorado."

What Educational Impact has the Waiver Made?: The waivers give charter schools greater flexibility to structure their employment relationships in a manner consistent with their educational approach and governance philosophy, and within the parameters of their limited budgets.

The issue of teacher wages and employment conditions in charter schools is one that is monitored and debated at the national level. Critics of charter schools charge that they will achieve any budgetary and administrative efficiencies "on the backs" of teachers. This issue was addressed in a recent national report on the status of charter schools conducted by the Hudson Institute.[1] The report notes that some charter schools nationwide offer salaries that are less than the neighboring districts, despite longer and more work days. Yet, most charter schools are having no difficulty finding qualified certified teachers.

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[1] Finn, Chester E. and Louann Bierlein and Bruno Manno. *Charter Schools in Action: A First Look*. Hudson Institute, Educational Excellence Network. 1996. The two-year study is funded by Pew Charitable Trusts Foundation. Hudson Institute-affiliated researchers are conducting case studies of 30 charter schools across seven states. The study began Summer 1995. The report cited summarizes the preliminary findings of the study.)

When asked why they chose to teach in a charter school, teachers offered the following responses:

- general freedom and flexibility
- family teacher and learning atmosphere
- increased decision-making
- dedicated staff and
- enhanced accountability

When asked what was negative about working in a charter school, the teachers' comments focused on lack of resources, inadequate facilities, and fear of long-term burn-out because of the demands of working with higher numbers of at-risk students and expanded responsibilities. Low salaries were not mentioned. It will be important to track the preliminary findings of the Hudson Institute study over time and across a broad range of charter schools.

C. Employment and Authority of Principals

Description of Statute Waived: Section 22-32-126, Colo. Rev. Stat., provides for the employment of principals, describes their role and requires that principals hold a Type D administrative certificate.

How Many Charter Schools Sought the Waiver? Eleven of the fourteen schools in the first year study -- all but Connect (Pueblo District 70), Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences (Pueblo District 60) and Eagle County Charter School (Eagle County) -- sought a waiver of this law. Three of the eleven charter schools identified this waiver among the schools' "priority waivers."

Why Did the Charter Schools Request the Waiver? The charter schools sought the flexibility to employ administrators who do not hold Type D certificates and/or to use an administrative team instead of a traditional principal model.

Was the Waiver Effective? All eleven of the charter schools which received a waiver from the operation of this act confirmed that the waiver has been effective in achieving its intended purpose.

What Alternative Policies Are in Place to Meet the Intent of the Law That Was Waived? Table 15 summarizes the alternative administrative models being used by charter schools in lieu of a traditional principal model, and the requirements the schools are imposing to insure that qualified individuals are hired for these positions.

Table 15 - Charter School Alternatives to Traditional Principal Model

Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12 Five Star)	The school manager must be able to meet certain business qualifications for the position that are not necessarily assured by a Type D certificate. The current manager has a background in business administration and accounting.
Stargate (Adams 12 Five Star)	The school divides the duties of principal among a Business Manager, Lead Teacher and Community Resource Coordinator.
Clayton Charter School (Denver Public Schools)	The school employs a program director who is the instructional leader of the school with primary responsibility for planning, managing, operating and evaluating the school. The director hires, sets salaries, appraises and terminates staff, with the approval of the President of the Clayton Foundation. Applicants for the director position must meet certain minimum qualifications.
Academy Charter School (Douglas County)	A Type D certificate is not required, but applicants must meet certain requirements. The current principal has considerable administrative and teaching experience in private and international schools.
Core Knowledge (Douglas County)	A Type D certificate is not required, but applicants must meet certain requirements. The current principal has extensive experience in the public and private sectors and has served as a superintendent.
Community of Learners (Durango 9-R)	A Type D certificate is not required, although the current administrator holds such a credential. The school employs an Administrator/Lead Teacher to facilitate management of the school. The school is looking at implementing management teams in the near future, that may include members without Type D certification.
Excel (Durango 9-R)	A Type D certificate is not required, but applicants must meet certain qualifications, including an advanced degree and corporate or school experience.
Community Involved (Jefferson County)	The school employs a coordinator, similar to a lead teacher, rather than a principal. The coordinator is not required to hold a Type D certificate and works on a leadership team with the Parent/Community Coordin. and the Admin. Steering Committee.
Jefferson Academy (Jefferson County)	A Type D certificate is not required, but the person filling the administrator/principal position must have an advanced degree in education administration, an area of education, or a management degree. School and corporate experience also is required. The present administrator has extensive private school experience.
Sos Tech (Jefferson County)	A Type D certificate is not required, but applicants for the administrator position must hold an advanced degree and school based or corporate experience. The present director has extensive educational and business experience.
Butte Rock Charter School (Mountaintop Center)	The school does not employ a principal. The teachers work directly with the school's governing board. The head teacher holds the role of School Director.

What Educational Impact Has the Waiver Made? Charter schools in the first year study report that the waiver has had a positive impact on the school's educational program, primarily by:

- enabling the school to design a leadership/management team and structure that is consistent with its philosophy of education and governance
- enabling the school to draw from a wider pool of qualified individuals -- this is especially important given the severe budgetary constraints under which charter schools operate; and
- enabling the school to create a more collegial management style.

D. Specific Duties of the Board of Education

Description of the Statute Waived. In Section 22-32-109 (1)(n) Rev. Stat., the law enumerates specific duties of elected boards of education.

How Many Schools Sought This Waiver? Twelve of the fourteen schools in the first year study -- all but Cornerstone (Pueblo District 70) and Clayton Charter School (DPS), sought waivers of this section. (While Clayton Charter School did not seek waivers of this section, the school's contract with the Denver Public Schools contains similar delegations of authority).

Why Did the Charter Schools Request this Waiver? Charter schools sought waivers of specific subsections of this Act to make clear that certain of the enumerated duties of the board of education (for example, prescribing textbooks and curriculum; selecting hiring staff and fixing their pay; adopting a school calendar; adopting conduct and discipline codes) would be under the authority of the charter school's governing body. This delegation of authority from the local board of education to the governing board of the charter school also is spelled out in the charter school agreement.

Was the Waiver Effective? All responding schools confirmed that the waiver was effective in achieving its intended purpose. Seven of the twelve schools ranked the waivers of specific duties of the local board of education as among the "priority waivers" that had the greatest impact on the school's ability to design and implement a coherent and distinctive educational program.

What Alternative Policies Are in Place to Meet the Intent of the Law That Was Waived? In all cases, the charter schools sought to have specific duties of the local board of education vested in their governing boards.

What Educational Impact Has the Waiver Made? The charter schools in the first year cohort characterize the impact of this waiver as:

- generating the autonomy to promote educational innovation and to maintain a consistent educational philosophy;
- providing parents, through the governing board, with a much greater role in decision making;
- fostering the implementation of a model of site-based management that promotes administrative efficiency as well as educational excellence; and
- allowing the charter school to provide an alternative curriculum program.

E. Specific Powers of the Board of Education

Description of the Statute Waived: Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-32-110 lists the specific powers of local boards of education, including the power to terminate employment and adopt policies related to in service training.

How Many Charter Schools Sought the Waiver?: Nine of the charter schools in the first year study sought waivers of specific subsections in this statute. None of the schools ranked waivers sought under this statute as among the "priority waivers."

Why Did the Charter Schools Request the Waiver?: The charter schools sought to ensure that authority referenced in the Act, primarily, the power to terminate employment and to adopt policies related to in service training, would be exercised by the governing board of the charter school.

Was the Waiver Effective?: All of the schools that obtained this waiver responded that the release had given the them the flexibility they desired.

What Alternative Policies Are in Place to Meet the Intent of the Law That Was Waived?: In all cases, the powers enumerated in the statute are exercised by the Charter Schools' governing boards instead of the local boards of education.

What Educational Impact Has the Waiver Made?: The charter schools describe the waiver's educational impact as:

- providing the autonomy to promote educational innovation and to maintain a consistent educational philosophy
- offering parents with a much greater role in decision making through the governing board and
- fostering a model of site-based management that promotes administrative efficiency as well as educational excellence.

F. Miscellaneous Accreditation Rules

Description of the Statute Waived: Miscellaneous accreditation rules promulgated by the state board that describe the reporting requirements for the school improvement/accountability process and that require each school to provide a program of instruction based on the local board of education's adopted standards.

How Many Schools Sought the Waiver?: Four schools – Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12), Excel (Durango 9-R), Sci Tech Academy (Jefferson County) and Battle Rock (Montezuma-Cortez) – sought waivers. None of the schools ranked waivers sought under this statute as among their "priority waivers."

Why Did the Charter Schools Request the Waiver?: In the case of Battle Rock (Montezuma-Cortez), Excel (Durango 9-R) and Sci Tech (Jefferson County), the schools wanted to avoid duplication of required reports. The Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12) pursued this waiver in an attempt to emphasize the school's focus

on DEA subjects.

Was the Waiver Effective? All four schools that requested this waiver stated that the waiver was effective to achieve its intended purpose. One school noted, however, that its hope of less "paperwork" had not been realized.

What Alternative Policies Are in Place to Meet the Intent of the Law That Was Waived? The charter schools that obtained this waiver substitute the reporting requirements spelled out in their charter for the reporting requirements in the state rules that govern the school accountability/improvement planning process.

G. Compulsory School Attendance Law

Description of the Statute Waived. The Ark. Colo. Rev. Stat. 22-33-104(8) requires local boards to adopt policies setting forth the district's attendance requirements. The policy must provide for excused absences.

How Many Schools Sought the Waiver? Two schools – The Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12) and Excel (Durango 9-R) – sought a waiver of the compulsory school attendance law.

Why Did the Charter Schools Request the Waiver? The Academy of Charter Schools (Adams 12) sought the waiver in order to implement a school calendar that starts later in the year and provides fewer in-service days and days off throughout the year. Excel (Durango 9-R) wanted to adopt a school attendance policy that was more consistent with the school's educational approach.

Was the Waiver Effective? Both schools state that the waiver adequately removed the barrier to which it was addressed.

Findings

Effectiveness of the Process by Which Colorado Charter Schools Secure Waivers

The evaluation was designed to generate three types of information to address this question. First, the questionnaire asked charter schools to state whether each waiver granted was effective to achieve its purpose. As described in the preceding section, every school answered this question affirmatively in every case.

Second, the questionnaire asked charter schools whether they were prevented or discouraged by their sponsoring districts from pursuing additional waivers. (The Colorado Charter Schools Act provides that waiver requests must be jointly made by the charter school and the sponsoring district.) Two charter schools, both in Adams 12 Five Star District, reported that they were prevented by their sponsoring district from pursuing other waivers of state law. Stargate reported that the district would not allow the school to request the right to hire non-certificated teachers (even on a provisional basis) and would not allow the school to enroll out-of-district students. The Academy of

Charter Schools also reports that the district would not allow the school to seek a waiver of state certification requirements.

Third, the questionnaire asked charter schools whether changes in the philosophy or leadership of the sponsoring district's local board of education had resulted in differing interpretations of the scope of the waivers granted. All of the responding charter schools in the first year cohort confirmed consistency of interpretation to date. This may be due to the fact that Colorado law requires a rigorous application procedure which yields a contract between the charter school and the sponsoring district that spells out the specific rights and obligations of the parties.

The cumulative record (at least of the schools in the first year study) suggests that the existing process for permitting charter schools to secure waivers is adequate to enable these schools to overcome statutory barriers to the successful implementation of their distinctive programs. However, the a cost application and hearing process does require considerable investments of time and effort on the part of both the charter schools and of CDE.

Context for Greater Autonomy

Overwhelmingly, the waivers sought and granted to the Colorado charter schools in the first year cohort address the status and rights of adults in the schools (governance, compensation, governance authority) and do not directly address the educational program. This pattern reflects the nature of the Colorado's education policy infrastructure as a local control state. Colorado does not have state textbook selection, state graduation requirements or state mandated curriculum or curriculum frameworks. If Colorado regulated these areas at a state level, as many other states do, the pattern of waiver requests made by the charter schools would certainly need to be much more expansive in order for the schools to exercise the degree of autonomy over their educational programs that they presently enjoy.

It is also worth noting, however, that many Colorado charter schools are consciously trying to contribute leadership and innovation in the areas of governance, site-based decision making and employment policies. Central to the design and educational approach of many charter schools is a vision of parental and community engagement that is much broader than common practice. Many charter schools are also trying to implement accountability measures – from shared governance to pay for performance – that create a sense of shared responsibility for student results. These new governance models require the extensive degree of site autonomy that the waivers make possible.

It is impossible to 'unbundle' the role of waivers from all of the other factors that contribute to the efforts of charter schools to enhance educational achievement. It is clear, however, that while the impact of waivers may not be quantifiable, the charter schools in the first year study view the waivers as essential to their ability to design and implement an effective educational program. This conclusion is consistent with research and analysis conducted at the national level.

One instructive way to consider the impact of the waivers is to listen to the schools themselves:

- "The waivers gave the school 'the necessary flexibility to hire individuals who were aligned with the school's vision and interested in the process of innovation.'" (Doc Hart Academy – Jefferson County)

- "Autonomy in selecting and designing the curriculum and educational programs has been very important for implementation of the school's vision. The waiver has also allowed the school to function on a local level with local governance." (Doc Hart Academy – Jefferson County)

- "If the school could not vary its curriculum from that of the district's [there] would be little reasons for the school's existence." (Academy of Charter Schools – Adams 12 Five Star School District)

- "The ability to determine the curriculum and conduct its own personnel procedures has given [CA] the freedom to explore implementing its philosophy in innovative ways. [CA] [the sponsoring district] has been extremely cooperative in giving [CA] autonomy in making these decisions. "The impact on the school's educational program is that students have a vastly different school day than they have experienced in the typical school setting. "Their daily and yearly schedule is different as well as curriculum content." (Community of Learners – Durango School District 9-R)

- "The waivers have promoted 'creative contract negotiations and team building with all employees.' "The trade-off for teachers who have been part of the waiver agreement is more control over most aspects of their work environment through site-based decision making and genuine team work with the administrative staff of the school." (Community of Learners – Durango School District 9-R)

- "The waivers allowed [CACS] to hire an excellence teaching staff and administration at a price it can afford and not available through other channels. Currently compensation nearly matches district compensation. However, school demands on a limited budget may make competitive compensation difficult over the long term. Such serious budget limitations may compromise the entire charter school movement and must be addressed. ... [The school's] ability to adopt discipline codes and uniform requirements contributes to the formation of school identity and pride in our focus to establish a first rate academic institution. "This also help create a learning environment conducive to academic excellence." (Core Knowledge Charter School- Douglas County)

- "The waivers 'enable PSHS to implement pay for performance, peer evaluation, student and parent evaluations. ... Parents were used as volunteer substitute teachers to provide additional planning time for teachers.' (Pueblo School for Arts and Sciences – Pueblo District 60)

- "The advisors were central to establishing the school as a freestanding institution, providing financial resources in creative ways and gaining a basic level of operational autonomy from the school district." (Clayton Charter School - Denver Public Schools)

- "Evaluation is now consistent with the school's instructional model. Instructors are much more involved in data collection, analysis and goal-setting. Evaluation has become a very effective tool for instructional and school improvement." (The Connect School - Pueblo District 70)

- "The advisors flattened the management hierarchy and decision-making process. It is a bottom up versus a top down model. The Board of Director's ability to set policies and remove staff members as well as the collaborative process of evaluation create a greater need for excellence in performance." (Community Involved Charter School - Jefferson County)

- "[Without the advisors,] we would not have a staff." (Excel Charter School - Durango School District 9-R)

- "To date and over the past three years our evaluation system has allowed us to retain high quality staff and terminate unsatisfactory staff. We have the flexibility to hire teachers who best meet the school's needs and are in agreement with the school's educational philosophy. All instructional supplies, materials, curriculum and textbooks are congruent with the unique mission and vision of our school." (Academy Charter School - Douglas County)

- "We set up our own [evaluation] program which allowed us the opportunity to evaluate our teachers monthly & the manner important to our program." (Jefferson Academy - Jefferson County)

APPENDIX

Sample "Charter School Evaluation Individual School Data Sheets"

Sample "Statewide Evaluation of Colorado Charter Schools Waiver Impact Questionnaire"

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Data Item Other	(Year 1994-95)	(Year 1995-96)
Parent satisfaction survey results	N/A	N/A 95% no-show/ cancels
Student satisfaction survey results	N/A	N/A

STATEWIDE EVALUATION OF COLORADO'S CHARTER SCHOOLS
WAIVER IMPACT QUESTIONNAIRE

FOR: Pueblo School for the Arts and Sciences, Pueblo School District No. 60

Name and Title of person completing this questionnaire: Dr. Sam J. Pantleo, Dean
Telephone Number: _____

1. The information below summarizes the waivers requested by your school from the State Board of Education, the rationale for the waivers and the alternative plans for dealing with the issues addressed by the statutes being waived. This information was drawn from the waiver petition. Your review of this information assures that our interpretation of the written documents is accurate. If any information in this table is incorrect, please correct it as necessary. Also, please state whether the waiver, in fact, successfully removed the barrier(s) to the school's educational program that it was intended to address? If the waiver was not sufficient to remove the barrier, please explain why not. Finally, please describe the waiver's impact (i.e. how it made a difference) on the school's educational program.

WAIVER: Certificated Personnel Performance Evaluation Act
RATIONALE: Certain provisions of the Act are not consistent with the school's philosophy or governance.
ALTERNATIVE: The school's staff will be employed by the University of Southern Colorado. They will be evaluated using the University's performance assessment procedures.
DID WAIVER REMOVE BARRIER:

Yes, removed District requirement of salary schedule, administrator "only" as evaluator of teachers. Evaluation system was approved by PSAS Site Council, USC Provost, and President. Performance Assessment system and standards did not require teacher union approval.

IMPACT OF WAIVER:
Allowed pay for performance i.e. teachers must receive meritorious rating to receive salary increase. 20% of staff is awarded superior performance with an extra monetary award.

Faculty developed standards in teaching, service, and scholarly activity, implement peer coaching and review, parent and student evaluation required.

WAIVER: Specific Duties of Boards of Education
RATIONALE: State law empowers local boards of education to determine curriculum and prescribe textbooks, to select and hire staff and fix their pay and to adopt a school calendar and set hours of instruction.
ALTERNATIVE: These duties will be undertaken by the school's governing board.
DID WAIVER REMOVE BARRIER:

Yes, curriculum required one level of approval, i.e. PSAS Site Council. PSAS implemented the Colorado State Content Standards in grades K-10, developed Personal Learning Records (PLR's) and Portfolio Assessment.

IMPACT OF WAIVER:

PSAS Faculty developed curriculum with PSAS Site Council Approval. Hiring policies are governed by USC Personnel policies. Salaries are fixed by amount of funds available. Salaries are not negotiated with union. School calendar is developed by staff with PSAS Site Council approval.

WAIVER: Teacher Employment, Compensation and Dismissal Act

RATIONALE: Certain provisions of the Act are inconsistent with the school's philosophy, size and/or governance.

ALTERNATIVE: The school may hire qualified staff, for example, university faculty or people with expertise in foreign languages or the arts, who do not hold a Colorado teaching certification or license. Also, staff may be teaching in areas other than those in which they are endorsed and certified. The school will not use the district's salary schedule. Teacher compensation will be determined by the governing board and will be based, in part, on performance. For several provisions of the Act, the reference to "school district" was replaced with a reference to the "University of Southern Colorado," but the operation of those provisions remains effective.

DID WAIVER REMOVE BARRIER: (NOTE: Please state whether the State Board required the teachers employed by the school to have a state certification or license by a fixed time or whether the waiver of certification requirements was granted without condition.)

Waiver requirements were granted without condition.

IMPACT OF WAIVER:

Waiver allowed PSAS to hire Faculty who were certified in another state, but did not have Colorado Certification. Substitute teachers were hired without certification. Parents were also used as volunteer substitute teachers which provided Faculty with planning time.

2. Identify the two to three waiver requests that were most central to the charter school being able to carry out its vision. Please provide a short explanation of why these waiver requests were most central.

Waiver of Certified Personnel Performance Act -- waiver enabled PSAS to implement pay for performance, peer evaluation, student and parent evaluation.

Specific duties of Boards of Education -- PSAS was allowed to implement performance based pay because requirement to have a salary schedule was waived.

Teacher Employment Compensation Act -- waiver allowed qualified parent substitutes which provided additional planning time for teachers to assess student performance on standards and prepare Personal Learning Records.

3. Did the sponsoring district, at any time, discourage or preclude the charter school from pursuing a waiver of state law from the State Board of Education? If yes, please explain the circumstances.

No

4. Have the charter school and the sponsoring district agreed on the scope and operation of the waivers granted to the school by the State Board of Education throughout the duration of the waiver terms? If not, please explain the nature and cause of the differences and how they were resolved.

PSAS and the District No. 60 School Board agreed in the original charter and contract to the following waivers:

1. District No. 60 Policies and Regulations concerning personnel and negotiations,
2. Agreement between District No. 60 and Pueblo Education Association,
3. Policies and Regulations concerning instruction and curriculum.